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PATHFINDING on Plain & Prairie

John McDougall

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PATHFINDING ON PLAIN AND PRAIRIE:

STIRRING SCENES OF LIFE IN THE CANADIAN NORTH-WEST.

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JOHN McDOUGALL

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. E. LAUGHLIN.

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PATHFINDING ON PLAIN AND PRAIRIE.

CHAPTER I.

"Thin leather homes"—Drudgery of the Indian women—Occupations of the men—Hunting parties and scalping forays—Triumphs of endurance.

It was during the last days of January, 1865, in the story of my experiences in our great Canadian West, that I parted company for a time with my readers in "Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe." We were domiciled for the night in Muddy Bull's lodge. The weather was intensely cold. I believe I am safe in saying that all through January the mercury never rose above 10° below zero, and that it ranged from this down to 50° below.

In our lodge, which was one of the best, with ordinary travelling costume on, a blanket or a robe over our shoulders, and a brisk fire in the centre of the tent, we were passably cosy; but even then we had to turn around every little while and "warm the other side." Great bright,

brisk fires were kept up in those "thin leather homes" of our Indian people, entailing a vast amount of work upon the women and girls of the camps. Gradually, by example, perhaps, more than precept, we brought about a lessening of the labor of the women; but in the meantime, during the cold winter months, the furnishing of wood to keep those huge fires going gave them constant employment. It must be said, however, they accepted the labor and drudgery with cheerful alacrity, and could be seen at all hours of the day stringing over the hills and across the plains with dogs and horses and travois, their own backs loaded to the utmost carrying capacity with wood.

The life of an Indian woman in those early days was, indeed, an extremely busy one. Packing and unpacking dogs and horses, making camps, providing wood, making and mending moccasins and wearing apparel, cooking, cutting up, drying and pounding meat, rendering grease, chopping bones to get out the marrow fat, making pemmican, stretching, scraping and dressing buffalo hides to make robes or leather —a long, tedious process, in which not only the brains of the worker were needed in order to excel, but also those of the dead animals as well—kept her going early and late. Besides all this, the manufacturing of saddles, travois,

tents and shagganappi also devolved upon the women; and yet, notwithstanding all this, they seemed, generally speaking, to be contented and happy, and with true feminine resource still found time to give to attire and adornment, and the practising of all those mysterious arts which have charmed and magnetized the other sex, doubtless through all the past of our race. No wonder these women and girls were at a premium, and cost all the way from a blanket up to a band of stolen horses! The more of them a man had, then the greater man was he.

Nor was the life of the male Indian altogether that of a sinecure. Somehow or other the idea has gone abroad that these Indians led a very lazy life. But if the man who thought this had spent some time with either wood or plain Indians, and had accompanied them on their hunting and war expeditions, he would have materially changed his views.

To follow a wood hunter on foot from before daylight in the short days, through brush and copse and heavy timber, over big hills and across wide valleys, on and on for many miles, sometimes until noon or late in the afternoon before a "kill" is made; or, having started game, to run for miles at a terrific pace, hoping to head off the quarry and at last secure a shot; then, having killed, to butcher or secure from wolf, or

coyote, or wolverine the desired meat and strike as straight as possible for the camp, sometimes many, many miles distant, with thick forest and dense darkness now intervening: or it may be to have all the labor and exhaustion of such a chase without the chance of a shot, reaching camp late at night wearied and disappointed. To continue this for days, sometimes feasting and again famishing—and all this not from choice but of necessity—could be counted no easy matter. It is not for fun, but life; health, income, influence, honor, respect, all these are dependent on your efforts.

It may be with the same wood hunter you start a prime buck moose or elk during those glorious days in the beginning of autumn, and he bounds away in his strength and swiftness. Your Indian says, "We must run him down," and leads off in long, regular strides, and for a time you feel as if your lungs were in your throat and your heart is beating a double tattoo. Over and under fallen timber, down precipitous banks, up steep hills, and it takes some time for you to "catch your second wind," and to brace up your will and say to yourself, "I am also a man," and then settle down like your Indian to steady work.

He, however, is doing more than you, who are but following him. He is noting lay of land

and direction of wind, calculating in order to cut across where your game may have gone around, watching the tracks, gauging the distance the buck is ahead of you, noting the settling of the earth at edge of pool or creek where the big fellow left his tracks as he ran, and you are encouraged and spurred on, or contrariwise, as the crafty hunter tells you in hushed tones what he knows.

Then, by and by, after an hour or two, or three, perhaps, of such work, you stand beside the fallen carcase and wipe your forehead and wish you had a dozen towels: but while your exultations and congratulations are hot within you, a word of caution comes from the Indian beside you: "The sun is low and the camp is far; let us hurry," and the work of butchering and skinning the meat goes on, till presently, with a load of meat on your back, you start for the distant camp. Suppose, as you tramped and climbed and panted, some one had said, "What a lazy life yours is," you would have shouted back, "No, sir; not in any sense is this a lazy life!"

Or it may be your hunter friend is in for a "fur hunt," and you start with him to make a line of dead-falls for marten, or to hang a hundred or so of snares for lynx. The snow is deep, and at every step several pounds of it fall in on your snowshoe; but from early morn until

late in the evening you tramp and toil, chopping and stooping and grunting over snare and dead-fall, and when night is on, having carried your provisions, blanket and kettle all day, besides the baits for dead-falls and snares for lynx traps, you dig away the deep snow, cut some wood and make a fire for the night. While the fire burns, you doze and chill, and pile on fuel and wait for morning, only to repeat yesterday's work, and so on, until, having made a big detour and hung your snares and carefully fixed your dead-falls, you in three or four days reach home. Then in a short time you must visit all these, and in the intervening days make your forays for food. No one who has tried this manner of obtaining a living will pronounce it a lazy life.

But suppose you were with some plain or buffalo Indians, and, as was about the average condition in the winter time, the buffalo were from fifty to two hundred miles from your camp—the rigor of the winter and the condition of grass and wood forbidding the camp moving any nearer to them—the hunting parties had constantly to be organized and the meat and robes brought from long distances home. Under such circumstances the hunter not only had to undergo great hardships, but also to run very great risks. Storms on the bleak, treeless plains, with deep snow, and travel of necessity

slow and difficult, were indeed as "the powers of the air" and darkness to encounter and overcome, and the really indolent man was not in it when such work was engaged in.

Then it was incumbent upon every able-bodied man, under the code of honor of the time, to make an annual or bi-annual or even more frequent foray for horses and scalps. These trips generally took place in the spring and fall. With the melting of snow and ice in spring, or the making of the same in autumn, parties large and small would be made up. Each with lariat and a few pairs of moccasins, and, if possessed of a gun, with as much ammunition as he could obtain, or armed with bow and quiver full of shod arrows, in the dead of night these men would start for the enemy's country, depending on sustaining life by the chase on their way. Journeying on, sometimes by day and sometimes by night, fording rapid streams and swimming wide rivers, what signified the breaking up of the season or the plunge into ice-cold water of river and swamp to them? These must be considered as trifles. By and by, when the enemy's presence is felt there will come the weary watching and waiting, amid cold and hunger, for cunning and strategy are now pitted the one against the other, and endurance and pluck must back these up or the trip will be a failure. One, two,

three hundreds of miles of steady tramping, with your camp always facing in the direction of where your enemy is supposed to be. Every day or night the scouts, making thrice the distance covered by the party, keep up their constant effort to discover and forestall counter war-parties, or to find the enemy's camp; and when this is found sometimes to hang for days on its movements, and, following up, watch for a favorable spot and time either to make a charge or to steal in under cover of storm or darkness and drive off bands of horses. Then in either case to start for home, and push on regardless of weather so long as men and horses will hold out.

After a successful raid those long runs for home were great tests of horse-flesh and human endurance. With scalded legs, blistered feet and weary limbs, and with eyes heavy for want of sleep, these men, now exultant with victory, would vie with each other in the race for camp. A lazy man assuredly had no place in such trials of endurance and of hardship. Furthermore, upon the men and boys of the camp devolved the care of the horses. The herding and guarding of these gave many a weary tramp or ride, and many a night in cold and storm, without sleep or rest. And finally, the constant need of protecting their camps from the wily enemy was a source of permanent worry, and always rested as a heavy responsibility upon these men.

CHAPTER II.

Camping in the snow—Our costume—Brilliant sunrise effects—Maple and her pups found at last—Striking example of "dog sense"—The Fort Garry packet.

JUST now we are surrounded by both wood and plain hunters. Maskepetoon in my time always had a following of both parties. The gambling and conjuring drums are beating in several lodges. In others, as in ours, the evening hymn is being sung and prayer offered, and presently we roll in our blankets and robes, and sleep, though it takes me some time to forget my lost train of Maple and her pups.

By 2 a.m. we are up boiling our kettle and snatching a bite of breakfast. Then by the clear moonlight we begin the loading of our sleds. This is tedious work, and had it not been for the innumerable host of dogs, our own to boot, we would have had this over and all ready last evening. Now in the keen cold of early morn even old Joseph has to move quickly to keep from freezing. To put from five to six hundred pounds of frozen meat on a narrow dog-sled, and as nearly as possible to maintain the equilibrium is no light task. But by four o'clock sleds are

loaded and dogs harnessed, we bid Mr. and Mrs. Muddy Bull a hasty good-bye, and are off to make the sixty-mile drive home in the day if we can. And who doubts our doing it? Not ourselves, at any rate, for the road is fair, our dogs fresh and strong, and we, costumed as we are, must move or freeze.

Perhaps I am the best clad in the party, and my clothes altogether will not weigh much. A flannel shirt, moleskin pants, full length leggings with garters below the knees, duffil socks and neat moccasins, a Hudson's Bay capote, unlined and unpadded in any part, a light cap, and mittens which are most of the time tied on the load, while I wear a pair of thin unlined buckskin gloves. This is in a sense almost "laying aside every weight," but the race which was set before the ordinary dog-driver in the days I am writing of was generally sufficient to keep him warm.

In my own case, I did not for several years wear any underclothing, and though in the buffalo country, and a buffalo hunter, I never had room or transport for a buffalo coat until the Canadian Pacific Railroad reached Alberta, and the era of heavy clothing and ponderous boots came in, with ever and anon men frozen to death in them! Not so with us; we run and lift and pull and push, and are warm. Old Joseph has for a leader a big dog called "Blu-

cher," and every little while there rings out in the crisp air the call "Buchen," for in Joseph's soft, euphonious tongue there is no use for "l" and "r."

Before daylight we have pulled up in the lee of a clump of poplars, and, kicking away the snow and gathering wood, have built a glorious fire. A hasty second breakfast, and again we are off, while the day-sky is still faint in the eastern horizon. And now the cold seems to double in rigor; old "Draffan's" breath solidifies ere it disappears into the infinity of frozen air on every hand. Even the smooth toboggan and the soft moccasin are not noiseless on the hard crisp snow of the road. It is cold, but the colder it becomes the harder we drive. "Marse, Buchen!" from old Joseph, "Yoh-ho! Put-eyo," from Susa.

The only dog inclined to sneak in my train is "Grog." I ring out his name so sharply as to make him think his last day has come, and he springs into his collar with such vim as to quicken the whole train into a faster step.

Now the morning is upon us, and presently the clear sunlight glorifies the waking world. Tiny shrub, willow bush, timber clump, valley and hill, with their millions of glittering ice crystals, are brilliantly illumined. The scene is dazzling and beautiful in the extreme. For miles on every hand as we run the shadows give way

to the most brilliant light, and here and yonder the dark spots, denoting buffalo, singly or in groups, stand out with startling distinctness on the great white expanse.

Stopping for our mid-day meal, we jerk our dogs out of their collars to give them a chance to lick snow and gambol around and freshen themselves generally, while we hurriedly boil our kettle and get out our supply of dried meat. While doing this we also give our dogs about two ounces each of the dried meat, just to liven them up and give them an agreeable anticipation of their supper—the one square meal in twenty-four hours they will have at the end of the day's journey. As we gnaw at our dried meat, thankful that what teeth we have left are sound, we drink hot tea and discuss dogs, Indians, white men, and the broad questions of civilization and Christianity. Susa is thoroughly optimistic and joyously sanguine. Joseph is also as to Christianity, but civilization and men and dogs, "well, he kinder doubts"—at any rate he will wait and see. But we cannot wait long now, so we tie on our kettle and cups, catch our dogs, and start away, leaving our camp-fire to burn itself out. As the shades of night are commencing to fall we turn our loads on their sides, and thus run them down the steep long banks of the Saskatchewan, then righting them

at its foot, dash across the big river, and with dogs pulling for all they are worth, and we pushing behind, we climb the other more moderate bank, and are at home once more.

There is general lamentation over the loss of Maple and her pups. The girls shed tears. Little George cannot understand how big brother John could lose a whole train of dogs and sled. Father had taken a great fancy to those pups ever since the Blackfoot trip, and he is sorry because of their loss. Never mind, we are at home, and we unharness and unload, pile away our meat and feed our dogs, visit with our friends, and long before daylight next morning are on the out-bound journey for more meat.

Reaching the Indian camp that evening, I was disappointed at there being no tidings of my lost train. But again we loaded, and started home in the night, and before daylight we came to the camp of a solitary hunter, John Whitford by name, where to my great delight we found the missing team. They had come to John's camp a few hours before us. John said that he heard a jingle of bells, and expected some travellers were either coming to or passing his camp. Then, hearing no further sounds, he went out to see what it was, when he found Maple alone in harness, but dragging the other four sets of harness behind her. Evidently the sled had caught in

some bush and the young dogs had become impatient, and one by one wriggled out of their bonds. Then the wise old mother dog had gone back to the sled and bitten off the traces close up to it, thus freeing herself from the sleigh and saving the harness. She then started for home, and concluding to rest by the way at John's camp, we found her there with her pups.

One often hears about "horse sense," but here was a good large sample of dog sense. That this dog, with her own traces and those of four other dogs between her and the sleigh, should pass all these and go back to the sleigh to cut away and liberate herself, and thus save to us these harnesses, was amazing. I would have rejoiced over the dogs alone, but to receive these back with the harness was great good fortune. I hitched Maple and her pups beside my own train, and taking some meat from Joseph and Susa, lightened their loads and on we went at a much quicker step. On reaching home that evening I need not say there was general rejoicing over the recovery of our lost dogs.

As the buffalo moved so did also the Indian camps, and gradually our meat trails went westward for the month of February. This trip it was fresh meat, and the next it would be a mixed load of pounded and dried meat cakes and bladders of grease and tongues, and as the

distance was never more than a big day's run, we would put on tremendous loads, so that gradually our storehouse was being filled up.

Through storm and cold, and sometimes very heavy roads, or no roads at all, Joseph, Susa and myself kept at the work of providing for our mission party. Those at home in the meantime were constantly busy holding meetings, doctoring the sick, taking out timber, whipsawing lumber, or hauling hay and wood. Indeed, there was no time to become lonely or to think of the onions and garlic of the former Egypt. Our party knew it was out in a larger wilderness, but, full of Christian resolution, each one felt as did Joshua and Caleb.

The event of the winter was the arrival of the February packet from Fort Garry. A few letters from Eastern friends it might bring, with two or three newspapers several months old; but this was the one connecting link, and the dwellers in the Hudson's Bay posts and at mission stations in the North-West, though far apart, felt a common interest in this packet, for it not only brought news from the far East, but also from one another. For days before its expected arrival at the post or mission the packet was the chief item of conversation. Many an eye was turned to the direction whence it should come. Many a person the last thing at night would

stand out in the cold and listen for the sound of bells which might indicate the approach of the eagerly looked-for mail. And when at last it came, how many were disappointed. The one lone chance, and still no news where so much had been expected.

And for the swarthy-faced, wiry-built, hardy men who brought this packet, as you looked at them you could see fifty miles a day stamped on their every move; fifty miles and more through deep snow, blinding storms and piercing cold. Picked men these were, and they knew it, and held themselves accordingly, heroes for the time being at every post they touched. Nor did these faithful fellows tarry long at any one place. Arriving in the morning, they were away the same afternoon. Coming in late at night, off before daylight next morning. This was the manner of their faithful service to the great Company which somehow or other had the faculty of inspiring its employees with splendid loyalty to itself.

CHAPTER III.

We visit Edmonton—Nature's grand cathedral—Adventure with a buffalo bull—A trip to Pigeon Lake—Racing with dog-teams—An infidel blacksmith—Old Joseph proves an unerring guide—Caching our provisions.

About the last of February father determined to visit Edmonton, and mother also went for a change. Father took Joseph's dogs, and drove himself. Peter, with the team Susa had been using, drove the cariole in which mother rode. I had charge of the baggage and camp equipage, the provisions, and the wood-work of a plough which we were taking to the blacksmith's to have ironed. We kept the river all the way and made the hundred or more miles in less than two days. It has always seemed to me in travelling up or down our ice-bound northern rivers, either by night or by day, that a solemn, reverential feeling well befitted the scene. The long gentle sweeps, and the succeeding abrupt turnings of the river's windings; the high and sometimes precipitous forest-covered banks, always like great curtains casting shade and gloom and sombre colors; the fitful gleaming

of sun or moon, or the brilliant flashes of the aurora light; the howling of the timber wolf or the barking of a family of coyotes, sending echoes to reverberate through the canyons formed by tributary streams—all these could not fail to impress the traveller. To me, thoughtless and light-hearted as I was in those early days, there always came a feeling as though I were in the aisles of a tremendous cathedral.

The great temple was completed. The Master Architect was satisfied. The glorious creation calmly waited. By and by the thronging multitudes would enter. In the meantime in humble faith and trust we worshipped. From a little ledge of bank in the thickly clustering pines, while our camp-fire lit up the nook with ruddy glow of warm light, our evening song of praise made the steep banks and the tall woods ring with lofty cheer.

We spent the Sabbath at Edmonton, father attending to his duties as chaplain and our whole party enjoying for a day or two the sojourn in the depot fort or miniature metropolis of this great West; then back down the great river, reaching home early the afternoon of the second day, which enabled Joseph, Susa, and myself to make ready for an early start the next morning to the Indian camps.

During the first part of March we made several

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trips of various distances, and fairly rushed the provisions and meat into our storehouse at the Mission. On one occasion, on our outward journey, as we were dashing through some scrub timber, a small tree which had been bent almost to the ground by the weight of some horse-sleds passing in, and had its sharp end projecting into the narrow road, caught me on its point and tore me from the sled on which I was stretched. At first I feared my ribs were pierced, but on examination found only my coat and shirt torn and the skin but slightly abrased. Driving on, congratulating myself on my escape from what might have been serious injury, presently as my dogs swung round a point of bush what should I see but a great buffalo bull, standing with his nose right over the track. Already my dogs were beside him, and feeling that it was too late to attempt to stay our course, or to throw myself from the sled, I called to them to go on, which they did, jerking me along at a jump right under the monster's head. I can assure you, my reader, that for the moment my heart was in my mouth. But now as we were safe I stopped the dogs, and shouted to Susa, who was coming next, and in the meantime succeeded in driving the huge fellow away from our track.

When we reached home from that trip, while I was unloading my sled, I told Larsen, the car-

penter, about the bull blocking the road, and he, noticing that my coat and shirt were torn, rushed off and told our party that John had been gored by a mad bull. Mother came rushing out to see what was wrong with her boy, and I had quite a time explaining about the tree and the bull. I note this incident in passing to show how stories are made up from imagination.

March of 1865 was a stormy month. The snow deepened, and many a hard piece of road we had to encounter. About the middle of the month we made another trip to Pigeon Lake. The readers of "SADDLE, SLED AND SNOWSHOE" will remember that Oliver and myself had visited the lake in December of 1864. Now our purpose was to take in some provisions, together with the plough, which was being ironed at Edmonton. As old Joseph knew the country well, we hoped to find a straighter road than the one we had taken before.

It was storming heavily, with the snow drifting in good style, as early one morning we took the river for the journey. Our party had heavy loads, and we were glad when Smith, who was with us in 1863 and 1864, and who had recently come home from Edmonton, drove up with a flashing train of dogs and a light load, and signified his intention of accompanying us as far as Edmonton. We thought he would take a gen-

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erous share in making the road, but in this we were sorely disappointed, for Mr. Smith and his five dogs kept well back in the rear. All day long Susa and I in turn ran ahead on snowshoes. The storm seemed to increase in strength, but our hardy dogs trotted steadily on up the river, and we camped for the night above the Vermilion, which was the half-way post on the road to Edmonton. The stormy March wind howled around in fierce gusts, and the snow swirled in all directions, but in the comparative shelter of our pine camp we were happy. Starting before daylight, on we went, Susa and myself in turn ahead, and our friend Smith never once offering to take the lead. The snow was growing deeper and our progress slower, and it was with glad hearts that about noon we saw the sign of sleigh tracks crossing the river, and soon were climbing the bank above the mouth of the Sturgeon, some twenty-three miles from Edmonton. "Now we will have a track; now we will make better time," we said to each other, as we climbed the bank. Then unhitching our dogs, we turned them loose to rest, while we chopped wood and made a fire in preparation for our dinner.

After awhile Smith came up, and seeing the track ahead, had the impudence to drive his dogs past us and place his sled on the road ahead of ours, which action said louder than

words, "Now, gentlemen, I will show you my heels from here to Edmonton." Susa and I looked at each other and winked, as much as to say, "Well, Mr. Smith, it is still twenty-three miles to the Fort, and perhaps we will be there as soon as you."

While we felt rather hard toward this man, who with his light load and fresh dogs had sneaked behind thus far, still this was our camp, and for the present he was our guest, so we treated him accordingly. However, when lunch was over and he had his last dog hitched, ours was also, and old Joseph stood with whip in hand, putting the last coal into his pipe, and pressing it down with his fingers. In so doing there was a spirit manifest in the action and attitude of the old stoic which seemed to say, "Well, young man, when you reach Edmonton, I expect to be there also."

When Smith said "Marse" John and Susa and Joseph said "Marse" likewise; and away we went, climbing the banks and on up the sloping valley of the Big Saskatchewan. It was a glorious day for the testing of muscle and wind and endurance on the part of men and dogs. The clouds hung low. The gusts came quick and strong. The track was fast drifting full, the footing was bad, the sleds pulled heavily. Even before we reached the summit of the long

incline to the river, Smith's dogs began to show distress. Old Draffan was rubbing against his heels all the time with his traces loose, as much as to say to Smith and his dogs, "My three companions are more than able to keep up to you, though our load is much the heavier," and Susa and Joseph were right up. Presently Smith ran up to thrash his dogs, and I saw my chance; so did old Draffan, and with a quick "Chuh" my noble dogs sprang past, and once more we had the road, and on we went. Gradually widening the distance between us and Smith, I knew that both Susa and Joseph would also watch their opportunity to pass. At any rate with even one ahead our credit as a travelling party was safe. After two or three miles of steady run in the loose snow, I looked back, and was delighted to see that Susa and Joseph had passed Smith and were coming on splendidly; and now our quondam companion was far in the rear. I waited for my men, and when they came up we congratulated ourselves, while old Joseph made us laugh when he said, referring to Smith, "He likes being behind anyway; let him have what he likes so much." And on we went to the Fort, reaching there a long time before our friend did.

The same evening I met with what was to me a new experience. I had gone to the black-

smith's shop to see about the plough, and the blacksmith began to question me as to what we intended to do at Pigeon Lake. I told him that father hoped to establish a Mission there. "Oh," said he, "you want to delude some more people with your fanciful stories about God and heaven and hell."

"Why," said I, "do you not believe in God?"

"No, I do not," was the emphatic answer I received, and a strange feeling came over me. I was afraid of that man, and took the plough away as quickly as I could.

The wild storm, the lonely night, the savage beast, or even more savage man, how often I had come in contact with these, and all this had not worried me very much. But here was something new and awful to my young and unsophisticated mind. No God! I found it hard to shake off the thought suggested by that man's expression.

The next day, when we were away from the Fort on our journey, I told my companions. Susa's eyes fairly bulged with astonishment, and Joseph said, "He must be without any mind," and we dismissed the subject; but as my father thoroughly believed in God, and we were abroad to do his bidding along the line of that faith, we tied on our snowshoes and took the straight course for Pigeon Lake. Old Joseph now be-

came guide. This was the scene of his young manhood. Here he had trapped beaver (ever and anon we crossed the creeks and saw the dams), here he had tracked and slain many a moose and elk. In this vicinity huge grizzlies had licked the dust at the crack of his old flint-lock. Long years ago he had helped to make this small winding trail which he now hoped to pick up and to keep to the lake. Big fires and wonderful growth had changed the scene. More than twenty years had elapsed since this road was frequented, but with unerring memory and skill the old man picked up the road, and on we went slowly through the deep snow, across bits of prairie, and while all around looked the same, without a miss we would again enter the bush on the unused trail. It must have taken centuries to develop a brain capable of thus having photographed upon it the topography of a country.

Saturday night found us some seven or eight miles from the lake and in a dense forest, with the snow about three feet deep on the level. Here we camped for Sunday, and again I noticed Joseph's consistent Sabbatarianism, for except for supper he never ceased to chop and pack wood until midnight, and thus obviated our working any on the Sabbath. From early morn this Indian had been tramping down the deep snow

ahead of our trains, and working his brain in order to pick up the old trail. He had lifted thousands of pounds of snow in the course of the long day's travel, and now he willingly and gladly works until midnight to provide wood for our camp, which, being an open one, consumes a very large quantity. And all because it is written, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." I do not know what my readers will think about this, but I do know what I thought at the time, and it was this: I would undergo hardship and danger with such a man beside me a great deal rather than live in the same house in comfort and plenty with the man who a few days since said to me, "I do not believe there is a God."

We spent the Sabbath quietly, and early Monday morning continued our way, reaching the site of the proposed Mission about noon. Here we found the cache Oliver and I had made, still secure, but surrounded with the tracks of a wolverine, who thus far had been baffled. Into this cache we put the balance of the provisions we had brought, and making it doubly secure, as we thought, placed the plough on top, and then retraced our steps back to the camp we had left in the morning. From this we reached Edmonton Tuesday night, and were home early Thursday afternoon.

CHAPTER IV.

Epidemic breaks out among the Indians—Snow-blindness—I take to me a wife—Our modest dowry—My father officiates as a Stationing Committee—Fearful mortality among the Indians—Our journey to Pigeon Lake—The epidemic attacks our camp—A rude hospital—An exciting buffalo hunt—Chased by a maddened bull—Narrow escape.

At Edmonton we heard an epidemic was raging among the southern Indians, and that many were dying. As to the nature of the disease or particulars concerning it we had no information. But even the rumor of its approach was startling, for in the absence of any Government or other quarantine regulations and with tribal war existing this disease would soon cover the whole country with its ravages. In the meantime, as the season was advancing, we redoubled our efforts to bring in supplies. To do this we had to travel largely at night, the March sun making it too warm for our dogs in the daytime. This night-work with the strong glare of the bright snow was exceedingly hard on the eyes. Many a poor fellow became snow-blind, and the pain of this was excruciating. Fortunately for myself,

my eyes were never affected; but it made me feel miserable to witness so much suffering and be helpless to give relief.

The Indians as a preventive would blacke. their faces with charcoal or damped powder, but as nearly all the natives had dark eyes, they were most susceptible to snow-blindness. My experience was that those with lighter colored eyes were generally free from this dreaded malady.

Old Joseph, Susa and myself made a number of quick trips to and from different camps during these March days and nights; and about the end of the month we gave this up for the season. Then it came to pass that I put into execution a project I had been contemplating for some time and that was to take unto me a wife. My bride to be was the daughter of the Rev. H. B. Steinhauer. I had met her in the autumn of 1862, when I accompanied father on his first visit to Whitefish Lake. Our acquaintance, which had grown into a courtship on my part, was now between two and three years old. Our parents willingly gave us their consent and blessing. Father and Peter accompanied us to Whitefish Lake, and father married us in the presence of my wife's parents and people. Our "honeymoon trip" was to drive from Whitefish Lake to Victoria with dog-train, when the season was breaking up, and in consequence the trip was a hard

one. Then after a short sojourn at Victoria we set out for the purpose of establishing the new Mission at Pigeon Lake, father having signified his strong desire that such should be done, notwithstanding that the Board of Missions had not as yet either consented to or approved of such a course. But father was thoroughly impressed with the wisdom and necessity of such action, and finally told me I ought to go and begin work out there; and, said he, "You can live where any man can." Of course I was proud to have father think this of me. His knowledge of the work required, and his confidence in my ability to do this work, more than made up to me at the time for the fact that there was not a dollar of appropriation from the Missionary Society. But father gave us a pair of four-point Hudson's Bay blankets, two hundred ball and powder, and some net twine, together with his confidence and blessing; to which in all things mother said, "Amen."

In the meantime the epidemic we had heard rumors of came to us, and proved to be a dangerous combination of measles and scarlet fever. Among the Blackfeet and the southern tribes hundreds had died, and already the mortality was large among the northern Crees. From camp to camp the disease spread. As winter still lingered and the deep snow was

again turning into water on the plains and in the woods, these lawless, roving people without quarantine protection, lacking the means of keeping dry or warm, and altogether destitute of medicine or medical help, became an easy prey to the epidemic.

Already many lodges of sick folk were camped close to the Mission, and others were coming in every day. Father and mother and Peter had their hands full in attending to the sick, ministering to the dying, and burying the dead. And as this was a white man's disease, there were plenty of the wilder Indians to magnify the wrongs these Indians were submitting to at the hands of the whites. Some of them were exceedingly impudent and ugly to deal with; indeed, if it were not for Maskepetoon and his own people, many a time our Mission party would have suffered. As it was life was constantly in danger. Men and women crazed and frenzied because of disease and death were beside us night and day. Nevertheless father said "Go," and we started from among such scenes on our journey to Pigeon Lake.

Father had loaned us two oxen and carts for the trip. I had some eight or ten ponies, about all I had to show for five years' work; but as I had been helpful to father in educating my brother and sister in Ontario, I was thankful I

had come off as well as I did. A great part of the way was under water. The streams were full, but on we rode and rolled and rafted and forded.

Our party consisted of my wife and self Oliver, a young Indian, Paul by name, and his wife. Our provisions were buffalo meat, fresh and dry and in pemmican. We had five bushels of potatoes with us, but these were saved for the purpose of starting the new Mission. I purposed having every Indian who might come to me begin a garden, and these potatoes were for seed, and should not be eaten. Paul and I supplemented our larders by hunting. Ducks and geese, chickens and rabbits saved the dried provisions and proved very good fare.

We scouted carefully across and past those paths and roads converging from the plains and south country to Fort Edmonton. Not until we had made sure, so far as we could, that the enemy was not just then in the vicinity, did we venture our party across these highways of the lawless tribes. Then passing Edmonton we struck out south-westward, into a country wherein as yet no carts or waggons had ever rolled; and now it kept Paul and myself busy hunting and clearing the way, while Oliver and the women brought up the carts and loose horses. Our progress was slow and tedious, but

we were working for the future as well as the present.

When up here in the winter I concluded that we could on the first trip with carts take them to within some twenty-five miles of the lake to which we were going. Working along as best we could, Saturday night found us at this limit, and as we were very tired, and the weather was fine, we merely covered our carts, made an open fire in front, and thus prepared to spend the Sabbath in rest and quiet.

Because of the dense forest and brush we had come through, and also as we were some thirty miles from Edmonton, we felt comparatively safe from any war parties of plain Indians that might be roaming the country, as these men were more or less afraid of the woods. Sunday was a beautiful day, but towards evening there came a change, and during the night a furious snowstorm set in. Monday morning there was nearly a foot of snow, and the storm continued all day and on into Tuesday night. We kept as quiet as possible under our humble shelter without fire or any warm food until Wednesday morning, when the sun came out and the storm was over. Then to our dismay Mrs. McDougall and Paul's wife were taken with the measles, and sending Oliver to look after the stock, Paul and I sought the highest ground in the vicinity,

cleared away the snow, cut poles and put up our leather lodge.

This we floored thickly with brush. Then we laid a brush causeway from our carts to the lodge, and moved our sick folk into the tent. In the meantime I had put some dried meat and pounded barley into a kettle to boil over the fire, and as the only medicine we had was cayenne pepper, I put some of this into the soup, and this was all we had for our sick ones. Just then Oliver came in, having found the stock, but was complaining of a sore back and headache. I gave him a cup of my hot soup to drink, and as he sat beside the fire warming his wet feet and limbs and drinking the soup, I saw he was covered with the measles. So I quietly told him to change his clothes and go into the tent. Thus in our small party of five three were down with the epidemic which was now universal in the North-West.

For the next five or six days Paul and I had our hands full to attend to the sick night and day, to keep up the supply of firewood (for the nights were cold and we consumed a great amount) and to look after the stock.

Our patients in the one-roomed buffalo-skin-walled hospital were very sick, and as we had no medicine to speak of, and nothing in the way of dainties to tempt their appetite, often caused

us extreme anxiety. Hard grease pemmican, dried meat, or pounded meat and grease are all right when one is strong and well, but it was more than we could do to cook or fix these up for sick folk. When we could Paul and I took it in turn to seek for ducks and chickens to make broth with, but there were very few of these to be found near to us, and it was not until the fever abated that, by leaving wood and water ready and making our patients as comfortable as possible, we went farther afield for game, and were successful in finding ducks and geese and the eggs of wild-fowl as our reward.

It was on one of these hunts, and while our sick people were steadily convalescing, that we came upon the fresh tracks of a buffalo bull. As we thought he might provide good meat we determined to follow him up. I think we had kept his track steadily for three hours, when all of a sudden my sleigh dogs, whom I had left as I thought secure at camp, came up to us on the jump, and now took the lead on the track, and very soon were at the bull, as we knew from their furious barking. We rode as fast as we could in the soft ground and through the dense bush, and presently galloped out on an old beaver-meadow. Sure enough the dogs had the bull at bay, and the old fellow as soon as we came in

sight charged straight at us. As there was an opening into another part of the meadow I thought he was making for that, so sat my horse, gun in hand, ready to shoot him as he passed. But this was not in the bull's programme. He was in for a fight, and putting down his head came right at me. My horse knew what that meant, for he already had been gored by a mad bull, and the little fellow did not wait for a second dose, but bounded on as fast as he could. My gun was a single-barrelled, muzzle-loading shot-gun, and though I had a ball in, I did not care to risk my one shot under such circumstances. In fact I very soon had all I could do to sit on my horse, keep my gun, and save my head from being broken; for in a few bounds we were across the meadow and into the woods, where, the ground being soft, my horse was hard pressed by the big fellow, who was crashing along at his heels. Fortunately "Scarred Thigh," as the Indians called him, was no ordinary cayuse, but strong and quite speedy. Yet owing to soft ground and brush the bull seemed to be gaining on us at several times. Paul afterwards told me he was so close to me as to raise my pony's tail with his horn, but could not come nearer to his much desired victims.

I knew that my horse could not, sinking as he was at every jump into the soft ground, keep

this gait up much longer, and because of the trees and brush I had no chance to shoot back at the bull. I was momentarily expecting to feel him hoisting us, when I spied a thick cluster of big poplars just ahead. Now, I thought, if we can dodge behind these we may gain time on our enemy. So I urged on my noble beast, and as if to help us, just as I pulled him around the clump of poplars, a projecting limb knocked my cap off. This falling right in the face of the bull for the moment blinded him, and with an angry snort he went thundering past as I pulled behind the trees.

"That was close," said Paul, who was following up as fast as his pony would bring him; "if he had been a bear he would have bitten your horse, but every time he put his head down to toss you, your horse left him that much." I jumped from my horse and patted his neck, rubbed his nose, and felt thankful for our escape. Then we tied our animals in the shelter of the large trees, and followed after the bull on foot, for in such ground and such timber we were much safer on foot than on horseback.

Already our dogs had again brought the bull to bay, as we could hear, and approaching with caution we soon saw him fighting desperately. Alert as we were he heard us coming and again charged, but we met him with two balls, and

"My cap . . . falling right in the face of the bull, for the moment blinded him." (*Page 46.*)

the old fellow staggered back to the middle of a swamp of ice and snow-water and fell dead.

"That fellow had a bad heart, or he would not have gone out into the middle of a pond of water to die," said Paul; and it was cold enough work skinning and butchering him, with the ice-water up to our knees. But those were the days when stockings and boots and rubbers were beyond our reach in more ways than one. However, the meat was good and a providential supply to us and our sick folk. Moreover, our dogs needed an extra feed, and they got it.

It was late in the day when two heavily laden horses and two tired men came in sight of camp, and it was as good medicine to Oliver, who saw us approaching and noted the fresh meat with a smile all over his gaunt and pale face, for the disease had wofully thinned the poor fellow. Only those who have been in such circumstances can truly appreciate the relief experienced by our sorely-tried party.

CHAPTER V.

Our caravan moves on—Difficulties of packing—Oliver's adventure with a buffalo—Novel method of "blazing" a path—Arrival at Pigeon Lake—House-building—Abundance of fish—Indians camp about the Mission—I form many enduring friendships—Indians taught fishing with nets.

Now that our people were convalescing we began to make ready for a fresh start, this time without carts. Everything had to be packed on the backs of our oxen and horses, entailing no small amount of work on the part of Paul and myself. As the ground was everywhere wet, I was afraid to run the risk of a relapse with any of our patients, and would not let them step off the brush flooring we had placed to keep them out of the water. The distance we had to travel to bring us to the lake was about twenty-five miles, and we purposed making it in two days. Our sick folk would find twelve miles far enough for one day, and our thin and weak horses would also find the distance sufficient.

Paul and I had two oxen and eight horses to saddle and pack with sick folk and tent and bedding and all our household stuff, and while

we did not seem to be possessed of much of anything, yet it was quite a problem to arrange all on the backs of those ten animals. Sometimes while we were fastening the one pack on, three or four of our horses would lie down with their loads, and in thus getting down and up disorganize the whole work.

We put our wives on the strongest and quietest horses, and placed Oliver on a quiet but very hungry Blackfoot cayuse, giving him our guns to carry in addition to his own. Thus we set out along the almost obliterated bridle-path which I had gone over but once and that in the winter time when the snow was deep, and which neither Paul nor Oliver had as yet seen. My memory was sorely taxed to make out the trail where there was open country to pass through. In single file and with slow and solemn steps our sick people rode their steeds, while our horses labored under the burdens of their weak packs. Paul and I were kept busy arranging these packs, for as our saddles were crude and our binding material rawhide, this would stretch, and the saddles or packs become loose, so that we were kept rushing from one to the other of our transports. This made progress so slow that it did seem as if even the twelve miles we hoped to cover would prove too much for the long spring day. But notwithstanding all the worry-

ing and the work we had some fun as well. During the afternoon, while we were behind the rest fixing up a pack on one of the horses, I heard Oliver in a greatly excited voice shouting, "John! John! Hurry—come quick!" I sprang away to the front, and found that our train was crossing a small bit of prairie, and from one end of it, and coming out of the woods, there was a buffalo bull charging right straight for Oliver.

My dogs were worrying the big fellow, but it was Oliver who demanded my attention. He had our three guns on the saddle before him, but seemingly never thinking of them, he kept shouting to me to "shoot the bull." In his excitement he had let go his bridle, and this had fallen on the ground, while his hungry horse was intent on cropping grass and would not budge from the spot. In vain Oliver kicked and shouted; what cared that Blackfoot pony for the charge of a buffalo? He was accustomed to this, and moreover was hungry, and here was grass, and so far as he was concerned all else might "go to grass." Not so philosophic, however, was his rider. He was all excitement. With a big muffler wrapped around his face, a blanket around his body and legs, and our three guns in his arms, he kept shouting vehemently for "John." As I ran, not even the possibility

of the bull hurting some of us could keep me from laughing.

Oliver dared not jump from his horse into the water that surrounded us, for I had threatened him all manner of punishment if he got wet and ran the risk of a relapse, and he was in mortal fear of the huge bull that was now coming quite close to him. But as I ran up, and before I could reach for my gun from Oliver, the brute took away in another direction, thus happily relieving the situation. He evidently was, as Paul put it, "a good-hearted fellow," and as we had all we could very well manage, we did not fire any shots after him. But this excitement and fun helped to break the monotony of our journey.

It was late when we reached a point that I thought would be half way to the lake, and we hurriedly cut brush for our patients to alight on, and unsaddled the oxen and horses. I had put the whole of our seed potatoes on my saddle horse, "Scarred Thigh," and he had behaved extremely well all the day, carrying his load without a jar or disarrangement, as if he instinctively knew we had enough trouble with the rest. But now he insisted on my taking the load from him before I should relieve the others. As soon as I went to a horse to unpack him the little fellow would step in between me and the

other horse, and plainly say by his actions that his was the first claim, so all our party said, "Help him first, he deserves it." To unsaddle the ten animals and unpack seven of them, to cut lodge-poles and erect the lodge and floor it with brush, to chop firewood and cook supper kept Paul and I on the jump until late, but our patients though tired were gaining strength and appetite, and we were thankful.

The next day was a repetition of the one just described, only more so—water deeper, timber denser, and creeks multiplying. My wife and I each had an old-fashioned Hudson's Bay trunk. One was painted blue and the other red, and we packed these on the biggest of the oxen, firmly securing them by the handles before and behind, with collar straps and breeching of harness; and now as these boxes rubbed alternately on the trees on either side of the narrow path, one could track them by the paint, this side red and the other blue, which often was a source of wonder to travellers who came later along this path.

When we came nearer the lake we were glad to find that the land around the lake, being higher than that over which we had come, was comparatively dry, and that spring was further advanced than anywhere else along our route. Thankful for this, we put up our skin lodge

near the place where we proposed to build our house.

We were not the first in the same line on this spot. Nearly twenty years before Benjamin Sinclair, a native lay agent, under the direction of the Rev. R. Rundle, began a Mission, but the coming into the vicinity of a party of Blackfeet, and their killing of some of the people, had created a stampede from here to Lac la Biche, some two hundred miles north-east, and this place was abandoned.

The little clearing had well-nigh grown up again, and with the exception of the lake in front we were surrounded with dense forests. The surrounding country was altogether more like my native land than any other spot I had seen in the North-West. The lake was approximately some five by eighteen miles in size, and full of fish—too full of the whitefish for these to be of good quality. But just now we could not test them, as the ice was in such condition that it was not safe to attempt to set a net under it. There was nothing to do but to wait until it melted before attempting any fishing.

Our first work was to put up a house. Humble though it might be, we hoped to make it better than the "smoking skin lodge." As we had most of the logs on the ground, we were not long in raising the shanty. It was another thing,

however, to whip-saw the lumber for flooring, etc. The building of the chimney, too, was altogether a new experience to me; and when I had built this to the proper height, I was terribly disgusted to have it smoke worse than the lodge did. But I soon saw my mistake, and pulling the greater portion down began anew on a different plan, which proved a great success.

One morning bright and early Providence sent us a deer. Paul took his gun and went towards the lake to get, as I thought, a shot at some ducks. But it was a deer he had seen, and soon he had it secured, for which we were very thankful, as our stock of fresh meat was now low. But what is the meat of a small deer to the eating capacity of five healthy people—especially those of our party who were now fairly over the epidemic? When you are on the one diet, and that wild meat, the consumption thereof is rather startling. In the meantime the ice melted, and we made a raft, set a net and caught some poor whitefish. We caught plenty of pike and suckers, too, and to ourselves and dogs these were a wholesome change.

The first Indians to come to us were some pagans, having with them two genuine old conjurers, whose drums and rattles and medicine songs were thum-thumming and yah-yahing almost all the time they stayed with us. As

some of the older members of this camp, and nearly all the younger ones, came to our services, which we held every evening and three times on Sunday, these "high priests of this old faith" renewed their efforts, if one might judge by the noise they made; but do what they would they could not keep their young people from our meetings. After a time a larger camp came to us, nearly all of whom were Mountain Stonies and mostly Christian or semi-Christian in adherence, and our gatherings became very much more interesting. But as all of these people had the measles or were convalescing from the epidemic, and had lost many friends because of the fearful mortality which this caused, we were hard worked in attending to the sick and in comforting the bereaved. As to the former, Providence smiled upon us, and all of our patients, young and old, recovered, which helped us in our first acquaintance and gave us the beginning of an influence which grew with the years.

Here I first met many who became my warm friends and bosom companions around many a camp-fire and on many a hunting field, when danger and darkness and hunger and storm alternated with peace and sunlight and plenty and calm. Here was great big Adam, who from being a first-class Pharisee, with demeanor a voicing of "Lord, I thank Thee," etc., became,

through the instrumentality of a hymn I taught him to sing, humbled and penitent, and sought forgiveness and light. He found it; and oh, how changed he became! And there was his son Jacob, one of the grandest men I have known, for whom both nature and grace had done great things. When I first saw him he was recovering from the prevailing scourge. A noble fellow he was in form and feature. He had a big record as a moose-hunter, and was famed as a long distance runner. As he spoke both Stony and Cree fluently, I very soon saw he was a man to be cultivated and made useful for God and country.

Then there was "Little Beaver," a Southern Mountain Stony, who very soon let me know that while he was glad to see me, he could never make up his mind to live down here in the woods and lowlands, but was always sighing for the mountains and foot-hills of his own section of the country, and who by his descriptions made me wish to start west with him and view for myself the land he loved. Another genuine character was "Has-no-hole-in-his-ear," an old man with a large family of boys who became my allies and faithful friends. The father was an ardent Christian in his way, and thoroughly loyal to the new Mission and the young missionary.

Later there came in a camp of Crees, amongst

whom was Samson, then in his prime as a hunter, and who afterwards became the successor of Maskepetoon as chief of the wood Crees. Samson and I soon found that we were congenial spirits, and our warm friendship continues to this day. There was also Paul Chian, a French mixed blood, who had grown up amongst the Indians, and was one of them in everything but appearance. He had been a noted gambler and warrior, and the blood of men was on his hands; but he had found that the blood of Christ is efficacious to the cleansing from sin, and he became a splendid character, a solid man, a class leader and a local preacher, always in his place, and a "genuine stand-by." And there were many good women in these camps who became our staunch friends, and in whose lodges we received true hospitality and many real evidences of a solid appreciation of our work and message.

These various people came and went at short intervals. I suppose during our stay at Pigeon Lake for about two months that spring of 1865 no camp of Indians remained longer than two weeks at a time. Until I provided them with nets they had none. Indeed, some of the plain and wood Indians did not know how to set a net, much less how to make or mend one. To provide twine and teach them to make nets was an

undertaking that took time to accomplish. Then to live in one place very long was a hardship in itself to these nomads of wood and plain, while to live on fish alone would be foolish to them so long as buffalo were on the plains or moose and elk in the woods. No matter as to time in the obtaining of these animals. The days and months might come and go—these men did not value time; that appreciation is an evolution belonging to a permanent or settled life.

CHAPTER VI.

We are visited by a band of Crees—Our guests steal away with a bunch of horses—Stonies set out in hot pursuit—Little William's strategy—Horses recaptured—We begin farming operations—Arrival of Mr. Steinhauer—Home to Victoria again—A memorable Sabbath—My gun bursts—Narrow escape—My mother's cares and anxieties—Home-made furniture.

WHILE we were building our house, and during the stay of the Stonies with us, a small war party of Crees came to our little settlement on their way (so they said) to the Blackfoot country. As they knew me they came to our lodge, and all went well the first day and night; but during the second night they stole out of our lodge, took a bunch of the Stonies' horses and put for home. Awakened by their retreating footsteps, I roused Paul and we struck a light and found our guests were gone. Then we ran down to the path leading eastward, and lighting some matches found the tracks of the horses. Immediately we aroused the Stonies, and presently one after another of these started on foot after the thieves. Fortunately for the Crees most of these men were still weak from disease and not at all up to their

normal condition, or it is altogether probable not one of the horse stealers would have reached home again. In heart and sympathy I went with the Stonies, but prudence and policy dictated that I should stay at the camp.

Knowing the road for the first thirty miles as we did, we knew that the footmen had the best of it, and it was just a question of how much start the men with the horses had. It was a time of great anxiety to me because of our having sheltered these treacherous thieves. And the more I worried over the matter the more I felt that the onus of blame would be placed upon me. Thus the long hours passed away until about noon, when some young Stonies came back thoroughly played out and discouraged and sullen. Then others began to come in, also exhausted. Measles and scarlet-fever had taken the wind and muscle from them, or else it would have been child's play, they felt sure, to catch up to those horses on that miry brushy trail, where they could go only single file.

In the meantime all of the stock had been hunted up, and when they found that twelve of the best horses in the Stony camp were stolen, there was lamentation on the part of the women and children. Only my new friend Jacob and Little William were still away of the whole number that started in pursuit last night.

There were five Crees in the party that had visited us, and there may have been more who did not come into our camp. Many anxious people gathered around our lodge that afternoon, but I think I myself felt most anxiety. Presently, though, out of the thick woods to the east of our small clearing Jacob rode in sight, astride of the big white mare which was as the apple of old Adam's eye. And behind him one after another trotted the rest of the horses, one, two, three, and we counted carefully until Little William came in view on the twelfth. Nine-tenths Indian as I was, I gave way to the one-tenth white man in me and cheered. All were rejoiced except some of the wilder young men, who would have delighted in slaying those Crees.

Jacob told me that after running about twenty miles he played out, and the only one near him was Little William, who was "all there," so he told William to go on, and he would come after him at a slower step. This he was doing when by and by he met William with the horses, he having received every one, and, said Jacob, "William will tell you the rest." So to William I went, and got his story, which was as follows: "After leaving Jacob I ran on at a good footstep. I knew that the horses were not far ahead of me; but I also knew that if

the thieves got out into more open country, which was now close, I could not catch them; so I pushed ahead, and sure enough I saw them driving as fast as they could. Sometimes I took sight on one, and again on two in a line. I felt like pulling the trigger, but what you told us last Sunday about Jesus and His loving all men would come to my mind, and I would drop my gun, and again sight it on those Indians. I was not afraid of them. It was something else that kept me from shooting. Then I thought of a plan, so I waited until they would come where the brush is very thick and the path very narrow; there I ran around to one side, and when nearly opposite the leader I came in close, rushed at them, and gave the "war-whoop" as loud and as fast as I could. They were so startled that they threw themselves off the horses and fled, and I rushed in between them and the horses, and turned them around, and then I shouted to the Crees, 'Flee for your lives! Those behind me will not be as merciful as I have been.' They thought when I came at them with the war-whoop that all the Stonies were on them."

Our public service that evening was one of praise and thanksgiving, on my part at any rate, and there were others who felt the same. A collision between the two tribes just at the

beginning of our effort, and for which we would have been largely blamed, would have very much prejudiced our cause.

In good time we furnished our one-roomed house. The chimney was a success, the floor was solid, and the parchment windows were in place. We had even gone to the length of putting bark on the roof, and had made a canoe and kept ourselves and dogs in fish, besides feeding a multitude of others. We had ploughed and fenced a small field and partly planted it, for the seed we had was distributed to so many Indians, and went into so many little fields, that our own share was a small one. However, the beginning of such a life was made up by all who came to us. A few potato cuttings and a thimbleful of turnip seed, those were the commencement of another kind of evolution. How many generations of persistent effort to make farmers of these men we did not then take time to estimate—"sufficient unto the day," etc. We had made a beginning.

We had held daily meetings with few or many, as these came about us, and all but the conjurers came to our services. Good lasting work had been accomplished (for even now in our testimony meetings I hear evidence of this), and now the Indians had moved away and we were left to ourselves.

I would have gone with one of the larger camps, taking my whole party with me, as this was true evangelistic work, but father had promised that, if possible, either himself or Mr. Steinhauer would visit us in order to administer the ordinances; but while the Indians and ourselves waited, neither came. Then after the Indians were gone Mr. Steinhauer arrived, bringing a letter from father instructing me to come back to Victoria to accompany Maskepetoon's large camp to the plains for a season.

So I arranged to have Mrs. McDougall and the rest of the party go out to the mountain trail and wait while Mr. Steinhauer and myself followed the largest camp on their hunt, as there were several baptisms and marriages I very much desired to have solemnized. Accordingly we separated. Mr. Steinhauer and I struck around the north end of Pigeon Lake, then westward to Battle Lake, and on down the Battle River on the trail of the camp, which we reached the second night out. As the next day was Saturday we travelled with the Indians that day, holding services morning and evening, and then spent Sunday with them, greatly to their delight

It was a beautiful valley that we were camped in. The newness and beauty of the young summer were richly apparent on every hand. The people were eager and hungry for the Word

of God, and there seemed to come a hallowing blessedness upon the day's experiences, making such an impression on my own mind that this has remained with me as a pleasant memory all through the years. Several were married according to Christian rites. Quite a number were baptized and many souls quickened, and with thankful hearts we rolled into our blankets that Sabbath night and slept the sleep of the weary. Another service Monday morning, then a general handshake, and we started for our return journey, this time by another route, making as straight as we could to the place appointed as our rendezvous with my party.

The first day out, as I was leading the way, a huge buffalo bull sprang suddenly from some "bush" close to me, and quite startled both my horse and myself. Then I saw him, and as he took across an open stretch, I carefully threw in a ball on the top of the shot in my gun (for we had been shooting ducks that morning), and dashed after the brute. "Scarred Thigh" seemed to think that this was now his turn to be the pursuer, and very soon carried me up to the big fellow. I blazed away at him, and saw I had hit him in a good place; but as he did not stop at once, I threw in a charge of powder, put a ball on top of it, fixed on a cap, and was going to fire at him again, when in grasping the gun I

felt a big rent down the barrel! Looking at it I saw that it was burst badly, and that I had great reason to be thankful that my hand was not hurt. But one does not at such a time think so much about what might have been as about what has actually occurred. Here was my gun burst, and though it was originally only an old flint-lock, and pot metal at that, still I mourned over its loss. But the bull was mortally hit, and soon tumbled over. We cut up the carcase, packed the greater part of the meat, and reached our friends the second day from the Indian camp. Then all moved on together down the country, keeping on the south side, scouting across the roads leading into Edmonton, and coming out on the Saskatchewan at Victoria.

We swam our stock, crossed our passengers and stuff in a small skiff, and found mother and the children with Larsen, the carpenter, holding the fort. The Indians had gone out on the plains, and father was off on the long trail to Red River or Fort Garry for supplies, also trusting to meet at that point with my brother David and sister Eliza, whom we had left in Ontario in 1860.

The large camp of Indians, and the fearful amount of sickness and death, had wearied mother and the rest of our Mission party, so that our coming brought them a glad respite from the constant worry and excitement of

having as close neighbors a people who were as excitable as these, and who were still in the condition of active war with the other tribes. Several war parties had arrived during our absence bringing in scalps and horses and also the tidings of the death of some of their companions. These occurrences would cause a furor of intense excitement in the large camp, and lamentations and scalp-dances resounded all around the Mission house. Moreover, to help the sick and sometimes to pacify the unruly had drained the resources of our storehouse and larder, until I found mother and family with very little provisions. At the time we arrived they were making meal after meal on wild duck eggs. Mother had neither tea nor coffee, the sugar was all gone, and she was obliged to fare as the children did, on water and milk. Neither bread nor vegetables were forthcoming. But the heroic woman was thankful for life, and did not seem to mind the lack of even the simplest luxuries. The little church was finished, and Larsen was getting on well with the interior of the Mission house and the necessary furniture belonging to it.

It is perhaps hard for people who have always had the opportunity of buying factory-made furniture to understand how tedious the hand-making of such is from the tree right to the

finish, and, after all, your articles of furniture crude and sometimes very awkward in appearance. Larsen was a Norwegian, and he gave us the style of his native land in his hand-made furniture.

CHAPTER VII.

I travel with Maskepetoon's camp—Effects of environment on the Indians—Nature's grandeur and beauty—Degradation through paganism—The noble Chief Maskepetoon—Indian councils—On the fringe of the buffalo herds—Indian boy lost—A false conjurer—The lad recovered.

MASKEPETOON'S camp had now been gone about two weeks, and my instructions were to accompany this camp for part of the summer in its movements, and to do what I could towards the Christianizing of the people. Accordingly, taking Paul with me, and leaving our wives and Oliver with mother, we started for the big camp. We took two oxen and carts and several horses, as father had made arrangements with Muddy Bull to make dried provisions for home use. Our course was down the valley of the Vermilion, and then out through the hilly country that runs by Birch Lake to Battle River.

We killed several moulting geese as we travelled, and enjoyed them as food. On our fourth day out we came up to the camp, and turning the oxen and carts over to Muddy Bull, we domiciled ourselves in his lodge, and at once became part of this moving town. My work

was all around me. Here was paganism intensely conservative, the outcome of many centuries of tradition. And here were its high priests, and the novitiate following which thronged after them, seeming to me as "the blind leading the blinder," if this were possible; the whole causing a devolution which was lowering the range of thought and life and ideal, and all the while producing a profundity of ignorance as to things moral and spiritual which in turn, as a logical sequence, affected the physical and material life of this people.

Doubtless environment has a great deal to do with the formation of character and being, but in the environment of these men, outside of buffalo and tribal communism, I failed to find anything that might be thought degenerating in its tendencies. The great herds of buffalo as abused by man were hurtful to himself, and therefore in the fulness of time the Great Father, in the interests of His children, wiped them from the face of the earth. Tribal communism has always been hurtful to individuality, and without this no race of men can progress. But apart from these factors in the life of this people, the rest of their environment was, in my judgment, of the nature and kind to help them, and to give them large, broad and fine views of life and all things. Why, then, this

degradation witnessed on every hand? This intense superstition and ignorance, to my mind, is all due to the faith and religion of this people. Their faith is a dead one; no wonder they are dead in trespasses and sins. We believe we are now coming to them with a living faith, but even then we require infinite patience. The change will come, no doubt, but when? O Lord, Thou alone knowest when.

To come back to environment. So far as nature's realm affected the sojourners in this part of the valley of the Saskatchewan, these should be among the best of men. Beauty and wealth and power and a mighty purpose are apparent on every hand. These hundreds of miles of territory, these millions of acres of rich grass and richer soil, these hundreds of days of glorious sunshine in every year, these countless millions of cubic feet of healthful atmosphere, surcharged with ozone so that one ever and anon feels like "taking the wings of the morning"—what a splendid heritage!

Look at this delightful spot where we are encamped for the day. It is now nearing the midsummer, and the hills and valleys are clothed in the richest verdure. Take note of these hills and valleys. Behold the shapeliness of yonder range of hills, and the sweep of this vale at your feet. See the exquisite carvings

of this ascent, and the beautiful rounding of that summit. Drink in the wonderful symmetry displayed in planting those islands of timber. Behold as yon fleecy cloud comes between the sun and the scene of sylvan beauty, how the whole is hallowed and mellowed by the shading of light! Think of the corrosions of ice and the cleansings of flood necessary to create such a variety of hill and dale as this. Ponder over the ages of later development, and calculate the layers of vegetable matter needed to make this wealthy soil and produce this infinite variety of flora and herb and forest and grass. Now to my mind all this is exceedingly helpful, and every time I look upon such environment I am made a better and stronger man. Then why not all men be thus helped and made better? All? —there it is, our faiths are not alike. Even a wrong faith is mighty to the pulling down of "strongholds," and man under such influences descends.

But even here there are exceptions, and environment has its way in a measure. Amongst these men and women you will come across those who are big and broad and grand and noble. Blessed be the Lord for this! And one of these latter even now is calling to me and speaking in broken English, "John Mak-e-doo-gal-un, come here now," with big emphasis on

the "now," and I readily recognize the voice and walk over to the lodge of the old Chief Maskepetoon.

"So you have come, John? I asked your father to let you come with my camp for a few weeks. There is plenty for you to do, my boy. But I called you just now, as my tent is empty, to tell you that I am sorry and ashamed that my son was with those young rascals who tried to steal horses from the Stonies at Pigeon Lake.

"I told him that under the circumstances I could not have done anything if he and his party had been killed: that he must remember that all men were now my friends, and especially all missionaries, and if I ever fought again it would be on the side of the missionary. That he should have gone from your lodge to steal the horses of your people made me much ashamed and sorry in my heart. I told your father about it, and he said the young men were foolish to act in that way towards you—that you were the Indians' friend; and I believe that, and I want you to work hard, and will pray the Great Spirit to help you to gain a power over young men."

I thanked the old Chief for his confidence, and told him I should always expect his advice and help in my work. Then I gave him my news, and he told me what the camp's movements

were to be, and that there was to be an immense gathering of several camps for the holding of the annual festival and "Thirst Dance" of the pagan Indians. He also told me that the buffalo were coming northward and westward, and we should move slowly to give them a chance to come in; that the plain Crees who were coming up country to join us were behind the herd of buffalo; and further informed me that the peace was effectually broken on both sides, and we might expect more or less trouble all summer.

I sat and chatted with the Chief and had supper in his lodge, and then arranged for an evening service in the open camp. These services elicited much interest. Paul, who was a good singer and a fine young fellow, would take his stand by my side. Then as we sang the people gathered, and our service would begin. I would take advantage of our surroundings or the occurrences of the day in the selection of my subject, and then call upon our old Chief or some one of our native Christians to lead in prayer.

In the meantime warriors and hunters on horseback and on foot and curious women and children with "tattooed" and painted faces would come around and watch and listen, but with native courtesy keep silence and act orderly and seem interested.

Thus day after day we publicly proclaimed

the Gospel and teaching of the Master according to our ability, for I was but a child in these things myself; and yet the Lord did not despise the day of small beginnings, but blessed us and our work. While during the week conjuring and gambling and heathenish riots went on in many portions of the camp, such was the respect in which Maskepetoon was held by all these people that they desisted from these things on the Sabbath. They even gave up hunting on that day because he wished it. Not that he thus commanded. Oh, no; he was too much of a real gentleman and too wise in his ideas of chieftainship to do this.

Slowly we moved out on the plains. Every day brought fresh scenes, and steadily I was becoming acquainted with these people. Maskepetoon always invited me to their councils, and seated beside him I listened to argument and oratory, and beheld genuine gesticulation, natural and true. Sometimes the Chief would ask me to tell about white men and how they conducted matters. I would respond with a short address on government and municipal organization, or at another time speak of civilization and some of its wonders, or give a talk on education, and Maskepetoon would say, "Listen to John. Although he is only a child in years he is a man in experience; he has seen

far and wide, he has gone to school, he has listened for years to that wise man his father." Then at the closing up of these council gatherings Maskepetoon would give judgment on what had been said, either approving or condemning, and settle the matter in discussion in his own way, when the Council would break up for the time.

Day after day we moved slowly out on the plains, the prairie openings growing larger. All this time strict guard was kept, and the camp travelled, when the country would permit of it, in several parallel lines of march. At night scouts were sent out in every direction, and all of the horses either tethered or hobbled up close within the circle of tents.

On every hand were scenes which acted as stimulators in the exercise of care to most of the inhabitants of our moving village. Here had been a fight. Yonder some one would point out where many had been killed. "This is where the camp was when we brought in so many scalps and horses;" and as I listened to these people I could in a measure begin to realize how exceedingly romantic their lives had been, and how constantly the excitement of tribal war had followed them.

One evening we were startled by the wail of a mother. Her eight-year-old son was missing.

The camp was searched and the boy not found. For two nights and a day we remained in the one place and made diligent search; but as we were now in the fringings of the large herds of buffalo, and the whole country was tracked up, it was impossible to find any trace of the lad.

One old conjurer drummed all night, and said that the boy was killed, locating the place of his death in a little valley near the line of our march the day the boy was missed. He was so particular in his description of the place and as to the manner in which the Blackfeet had waylaid the boy, that many thought the old conjurer was telling the truth, and quite a number went with the "Medicine Man" to the spot he had so vividly described. But while they found the spot just as he had indicated, there were no traces of the lost boy, nor yet any signs of the enemy. Needless to say, the party came back very much disgusted with their "false prophet."

Another "sight-seer" went into his mysterious lodge, and when he came out he said the boy was alive, that he had passed to the east of our course, and gone on until he was bewildered, and continuing his wanderings he was found by Indians from another camp which was now coming up country from the east to intercept us. This was more comforting, but who could vouch for its truth? Nevertheless this did

prove true, for some three or four days later, after we had encamped for the day, some strangers were seen approaching, and when they were formally seated, and each had taken a few whiffs of the big pipe, one of them deigned to open his lips and tell us that a strange boy had been found and was now in their camp; that at first he was quite out of his head, but after a day or two came to himself, and told them where he came from, and the place to which our camp was heading; and thus they had intercepted us. These couriers also told us of several other camps which were coming up to join ours for the Thirst Dance Festival. The poor mother was overjoyed to hear of her boy's safety, and our whole camp rejoiced with her.

CHAPTER VIII.

The "Thirst Dance"—"Tobacco messages"—The head conjurer—"Dancing lodges"—The rendezvous—The "idol tree"—Meeting of the head conjurer and the chief of the warriors—An anxious moment—Building the "temple"—Self-torture, dancing and sacrifices—The festival concluded—Romantic situation for our camp.

WE now were drawing close to the spot which had been indicated by the chief priest of the season as a desirable place for the annual religious festival. Couriers came and went from the several camps. The excitement intensified, and our camp was all astir in anticipation of meeting with the multitudes who, like us, were making for this common ground of appointment. I will here give my readers a brief description of this great festival, known as

THE THIRST DANCE.

This religious gathering has been for ages an annual occurrence. It is an occasion for the fulfilment of vows, and an opportunity for the more religious of this pagan people to make sacrifices and to endure self-inflicted torture

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and hardship in meeting the requirements of the traditional faith of their fathers.

As the season for this approached some leading men sent "tobacco messages" to different camps near and far, intimating that the time had come for the annual festival, and suggesting the most desirable locality. This latter was determined largely by the proximity of buffalo and the conditions of tribal war.

These tobacco messages were carefully worded and wrapped in the presence of trusty couriers, who would make all haste in reaching their several destinations, often travelling night and day, and generally on foot. When they reached the camps to which they were sent their message was received with solemn dignity and themselves treated with hospitable respect.

Then in quiet council the tobacco was unwrapped and the proposition discussed. If assented to the tobacco was smoked and the head man commissioned to send a return message signifying assent and willingness to come to the appointed place. And now from long distances these camps would move steadily towards the location indicated. The big meeting, the rites to be observed, the blessings that would ensue, the character and prestige and the temporal and supernatural ability of those leaders expected to attend to all these things, were the constant

topics of conversation of all these converging camps.

The conjurer rehearsed his medicine hymns, sorted over his medicine bag, fixed his rattles and bells, and retouched his ghastly costume. The warrior went over in memory his bravest deeds and most notable exploits, and carefully arranged his war dress, mending here and fixing there, and generally burnishing up for this grand chance for glorious display. And the women and belles of the camp, notwithstanding all the work of constant moving and making extra provisions to be used during the festival, missed no opportunity to make ready their finery for special use on this great occasion, though all they might have would be contained in a small bag made of calf-skin, and would consist mainly of beaded leggings and shoulder straps and a much-brassed leathern girdle.

In the meantime the originator of this concentrative movement was having a hard time of it. The responsibility of the whole gathering rested heavily upon him, and to prepare himself for his duties he fasted and thirsted, left his home and camp, and stayed nights and days alone in cold and wet with little or no covering for his naked body. He petitioned and prayed to "the Spirits," and seemed to commune with them. He grew wan and wasted physically; but he

developed spiritually, and there seemed to come to his very appearance that which was supernatural. As the time drew near this intensified. There was a weird mystery about this man, which was felt through all the camp.

The conjurers prepared their medicines, and night and morning before camp moved the drums beat furiously, "dancing lodges" were erected at every encampment, and the four orders of dancers took their turns. The "wood partridges," the "prairie chickens," "medicine rattlers," and the "kid foxes," each in turn to vocal and drum music went through their evolutions of movement. Sacrifices were got ready and consecrated, and amidst night and day alarms from the enemy, and all the necessary hunting for the maintenance of these camps, this work of preparation went on for days and sometimes weeks. And now the chosen spot is reached, which is accomplished almost at the same time, for the scouts and couriers have kept the different camps in touch, and the movement of each has been governed for the purpose of reaching the rendezvous about the same day. But this strange crowd is gathered for a specific purpose, and no time is lost. The conjurers and medicine-men convene in one part of the camp, the warriors in another; and while the priests and medicine-men intensify their petitions and incantations,

the warriors go out to scout the country and search for a suitable tree to be used as the centre or "idol tree."

A sharp watch is kept for the scouts, and when these are seen returning to camp the medicine-men form in procession with their chief (*pro tem.*), the originator of this whole movement, at their head, and march through camp singing and incanting and speaking in unknown tongues. The chief medicine-man holds a big pipe with a sacred stem in his hands, and with this he points heavenward and earthward and all around, following the sun, and thus in solemn aspect and with dignified movement these high priests of an old faith march out of camp to meet the warriors. Now comes the crucial time for this chief medicine-man. If these warriors accept the pipe from him then the success of his venture is assured. But if they do not take the pipe as he offers it to them the whole scheme is a failure, and a new chief priest and a new location will have to be sought. No wonder it is a tense moment for the would-be high priest of this great gathering.

The two companies draw near to each other, and while the priests are chanting in doleful notes petitionary and sacrificial hymns, and the warriors are lustily singing songs of victory, the whole camp is hushed in silent expectation as to

the outcome. The warriors know the issue lies with them, and carry themselves accordingly. In all the pride and pomp of martial dignity and costume they sit their picked steeds and await the priest's action. This personage is now almost unnerved. The long vigils and fastings and hardships have emaciated his body, and this is weak; but his communings with the spiritual have made him feel that he has a mission, and that he is essential to the well-being of his people. He has grown within the last few days to believe he is an apostle and a bringer of good, and in his mind he feels these warriors must in their own interest accept him. Nevertheless there is the possibility of their not doing so. No messenger has reached him from the secret conclave held yonder behind the hills. Soon he will know. And now he pulls himself together, and, at first with quavering voice and trembling limbs, he holds the sacred pipe aloft and prays. Immediately in front of him is the chosen chief of the warriors, who gives no indication of what he is going to do in this matter. In silence he and the entire assemblage listen as the aspirant for priestly honors seems to forget himself in the intenseness of his purpose. His voice gathers strength, his limbs cease to tremble, and with native and pure eloquence he calls upon the Deity to bless this gathering, to pity his children,

to accept their sacrifices, to smile upon their effort. His metaphors are beautiful, his similes are fine; the range of his thought reaches the heavens above and covers the earth beneath. There is a spell that accompanies the prayer. His whole soul is in it. If you and I had been there, my reader friend, we would have seen the countenance of the warrior chief undergo a change. Fence as he will, he is caught, and as we look we say to ourselves, "He will accept the sacred pipe." And presently as the priest stops he steps forward, and with a majestic wave upward and downward and all around, he hands the sacred emblem to the warrior. While the crowd watch him in breathless expectancy the latter takes it from him, also lifts it heavenward and then earthward, and then all around the complete circle, and the air rings with joyous acclamations. The feast is to take place, and the time is now.

This being settled the warriors parade around the camp in full review. Others go and cut down the "idol tree," and now the warriors break ranks, and dashing into the camp open the lodges and take from them the young women of the camp and hurry these along with them to haul home the idol tree. Many long lines are fastened to this tree, and the women on foot and the warriors on horseback take hold of these

lines and pull together, and thus proceed homeward. Others act as drivers and shout and fire off their guns to urge on the men and women. As the camp is neared immense crowds of the old and infirm and of women and children join in the march, and thus the idol tree is brought to the spot where the temple is to stand.

Meanwhile others are cutting and hauling home the posts and pillars and beams required for the "big lodge." Not a nail or pin is used in this structure. Each joint and splice is firmly secured with green hide, which as it dries becomes very tight and strong. All work with alacrity. Everything about the erection of the temple is done on the principle that "the king's business requires haste."

When the idol tree is raised in place the conjurers make a special effort with medicine-rattles and religious singing. Some make the "nest" in the idol tree, or, as it might be called, the sacrificial table, and fasten in and on this the sacrifices which had been purchased long before at the trading-posts for this purpose. All the timbers in place, the whole is covered with the lodges of the principal men of the camp, it being thought an honor to have these used in this way. And now the high priest approaches. He has a big buffalo head mask, both himself and the head well covered with earth. Stepping slowly, and

wailing as he walks, he enters the temple. Immediately on his entrance is made the inner circle for those who have vows and will dance through the long hours. Then a spot in the temple is selected for the drummers and singers, and these come in turns, so that the choir is continuous day and night during the festival. Fire is placed in four places, and on these fires are put sweet smelling herbs, which as they burn create incense. Then the high priest takes a whole parchment and speaks to the Great Spirit, and to all the lesser powers; then swings the parchment four times, while all the dancers blow their horn whistles. The high priest now throws the parchment into the centre, all the drummers and singers start up, and the entire company join in the chorus. In the inner circle, and immediately around the "idol tree," the real dancers who are to undergo torture are arranging themselves.

Some of these attach long lines to the "idol tree," and then passing the end through the muscles of their arms thus dance and swing around the circle. Others hang guns to the tendons of their back, and dance with these swinging and jerking about them. Others go from out the camp, and finding a bull's skull with horns attached, pass a line through the eyelets, and then hitch themselves to the other end of the line through the tendons of the back,

and drag the head to the temple, entering amongst the dancers for the rest of the festival.

One man, at the time I am writing of, thus hitched himself to a big skull, and dragged this around the big encampment seven times, wailing as he pulled and tugged, and thus sought for forgiveness and salvation.

The self-tortured and the dancers do not eat or drink until the afternoon of the third day. At that time the warriors in costume come in a body to the temple, the bravest ten in the lead, all singing as they march, either on foot or on horseback, and forming a circle just outside the "thirst lodge." Then come those who make gifts; and horses, guns, blankets, etc., are placed in the ring as a general offering, being afterwards distributed to the needy and the infirm. Then the bravest warriors are led out into the centre, and made to recite their exploits and escapades, and between these recitals the various orders of dancers alternate in exhibition of their peculiar skill. Inside the temple torture and thirst and exhaustion; outside, declamation and glory and joyous celebration. And as the sun draws near to the earth on the evening of the third day the annual festival is finished. A day or two later the big camp divides into several smaller camps, each going its own way, leaving only the bare poles around the "idol tree," from the tops of which flutter in the breeze the various-colored

sacrificial cloths to remind of this great religious gathering of the wood and plain Crees.

Our camp, having in it the high priest or chief conjurer for this year, might fittingly be called the "Convenor," and therefore it was in place for us to reach the rendezvous before the others. This we did one lovely afternoon, and I could not but admire the selection made by the high priest as the scene of this year's festival.

We camped on the crest of a plateau or table-land, where to the south and west from our feet the country sloped gently to the valley of the Iron Creek, which wound its way from the west and then with a majestic sweep turned southward to the Battle River, its terraced banks with their beautifully timbered heights giving grace to the scene. Where we stood was a fine large plain, with very little, if any, cover for the wily enemy to approach from behind. But within a few miles, and thence on as far as the eye could reach, were ranges of hills, in the valleys of which, as also on their stately summits, prairie and timber were struggling for supremacy, each alternately being beaten, but the whole making a lovely picture.

To-day we have the wild nomadic heathen life, but doubtless in the near to-morrow this will give way to permanent settlement, and the church and school will bring in the clearer light of a larger and fuller revelation.

CHAPTER IX.

Our great camp a study of native types—I attend a "wolf feast"—A disgusting orgie—Paul and I start for home—Our horses stampede—Difficult tracking—Enormous herd of buffalo—Home again and all well—Party of half-breeds from the Red River settlement at our Mission—Father returns, bringing a brother and sister from Ontario.

In two or three days our camp grew immensely, and many distinct types of men were at hand for one to study and become acquainted with. The absorbing theme was the approaching festival. For this warriors were preparing, and many devotees were praying; for this every conjurer in the camp was making medicine, and day and night the tapping of drums and the intoning of religious songs went on. Morning and evening we also sang our hymns and held our services, and were ardently studying this new strange life—every day acquiring a better grip of the language and beginning to waken up to the largeness of its vocabulary.

One day I was invited to a "wolf feast." Being a learner I went, and was both shocked and amused at what I saw. About two dozen

sat around in the large buffalo lodge, and before each one a big wooden dish of thick soup was placed. This soup was made by boiling slices of fat buffalo meat and wild lily roots together. Neither Maskepetoon nor myself took part. When each guest was served an old medicine-man began to chant in an unknown tongue, accompanying himself by swinging his rattles. By and by all who were to partake joined in the song of blessing. This over, each one drew his big bowl to him and at a signal put both hands into the hot soup, and feeling all through it for chunks of meat, pulled these to pieces and then began to cram the contents of the dish down his throat. While doing this, each one made a noise like the growling of a wolf. And now the race was fast and furious as to who should soonest swallow all that was given to him. The growling and snarling and gulping was terrible, and I was glad when it was over and one and another turned his wooden dish over. I had seen a wolf feast, but, as I told my friend the old Chief, I did not wish to see another. It was almost as nauseating as a drunken carousal amongst the cultured white men in the east! I noticed that it was only a certain class of these pagan men who thus brutalized themselves—that even in those early days the larger percentage of the Indians held aloof from such beastly orgies.

Muddy Bull, mine host, laughed when I told him what I had seen, and said that only a few of his people ever thus disgraced themselves.

While the camp was all excitement in preparation for the annual festival, word was brought in that the buffalo had gone into the north between us and the Mission. This made it possible for war parties to go north also; and from what I heard in camp I began to be anxious about our folk at home. Finally I conferred with Maskepetoon and he said that it might be better for me to go in to the Mission. So I left the oxen and carts with Muddy Bull, held an evening service with our people, and then as darkness was coming on one night Paul and I left the large camp and took our course northward.

We went out in the dark because signs of the enemy had been noted, and as our party was small we did not want to be seen by those hostile to us. Steadily and in silence we rode, taking a straight course for Victoria. Some time after midnight we stopped on a hill to rest our horses. We had one horse packed with dried provisions, stored in two large saddle-bags, and unpacking and unsaddling I tied the end of the lariat which was on my horse's neck to these saddle-bags, and with my gun at hand stretched myself beside them, while our horses fed around us. The night was very cloudy and dark, and both Paul

and I dozed. Suddenly our horses stampeded and made back towards the camp. Seizing our guns we ran after them, but when we could not hear the sound of their hoofs any longer we sat down and waited for daylight. Whether it was hostiles or wolves or buffalo which had stampeded our horses we could not tell; there was nothing to do but wait for daylight, and be ready for anything that might turn up in the meantime. So we sat in silence and in profound darkness, for the clouds had thickened. Soon the rain came down, and in a very short time we were completely drenched. Several times there were noises near us, but these came from buffalo who were on the move past. After what appeared an interminable time, morning broke dark and cloudy, and we began a search for our horses.

As the day grew lighter we found that great herds of buffalo had passed through the country, and it seemed as if every inch of ground was tracked up. The grass was cropped close, and for hours we walked to and fro, never far from where the last sound of our flying steeds had come. At last I caught sight of a buffalo chip which had been broken by something dragging over it, and then I found another, and concluded that my horse was dragging the saddle-bags behind him in his flight.

I signalled to Paul, and he, after examining this clue, came to the same conclusion, and slowly we followed this our only sign. Slowly from one buffalo chip to another we travelled, and when baffled one would stay with the last trace and the other go on and look for another, and finding this we continued our anxious search until about noon, when we came upon all but one of our horses. As my saddle-horse was still fast to the saddle-bags, the first thing we did was to take out some dried meat to appease our ravenous appetites. Then we retraced our way to the place we had stayed during the night. Finding our outfit intact, we saddled up and continued our journey, hoping that the one stray horse would be found later by some friendly hunters. This actually did take place, for some months later I found the horse at Edmonton, to which place he had been brought by some French half-breeds who had recognized him.

Now once more we were on our journey north. During the afternoon I had a revelation given me as to the number and nomadic character of the buffalo. I had by this time spent three years on the plains in the buffalo country, had seen great herds of these wild cattle, and thought I knew something about them. My food had consisted almost altogether of their meat. My bed, travelling or at home, was over and under

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their robes. But that afternoon, as we steadily trotted northward across country, and ever and anon broke into a canter, I saw more buffalo than I had ever dreamed of before. The woods and plains were full of them. During the afternoon we came to a large round plain, perhaps ten miles across, and as I sat my horse on the summit of a knoll looking over this plain, it did not seem possible to pack another buffalo into the space. The whole prairie was one dense mass, and as Paul and I rode around this large herd I could not but feel that my ideas concerning buffalo and the capability of this country to sustain them were very much enlarged. I had in the three years seen hundreds of thousands of buffalo, had travelled thousands of miles over new trails, but I had seen only a small number of the great herds, and but a very small portion of the great North-West. Truly these were God's cattle upon a thousand hills, and truly this greater Canada is an immense country.

On we jogged, early and late, watching our horses carefully and taking extreme precaution against surprise. Nothing, however, occurred to disturb us, and by the evening of the third day we were in sight of home, and could see our loved ones moving in and out around the Mission premises.

Crossing the big river we found all well and

delighted to have us home again. We had been away a little over a month, and as yet there was no word from father or the east country. Our isolation during those early years was complete if not "splendid." We were in a big world, but it was distinct from the ordinary. No mails or telegrams disturbed its continuous monotony —and yet our life was never really monotonous. The very bigness of our isolation made the life unique and strange, and the constant watchfulness against surprise and danger seemed to give it zest. Then the struggle for food kept us constantly busy.

One day, shortly after our return, we formed a party and made a flying horseback visit to the sister Mission at Whitefish Lake, and came back on the jump; my wife and sister being excellent horse-women, and a sixty-mile canter a common experience. In our party we had Mr. George Flett and wife. Mr. Flett at that time was post-trader for the Hudson's Bay Company. Later on he became a successful missionary in the Presbyterian Church.

Settling down for a little on our return, we went to work cutting hay. Those were the days when men swung the scythe, and muscle and wind told on the unmeasured and unfenced hay-fields of the Saskatchewan. Hard work it was from early morn until evening; but we cut

a good bit of hay, and had it stacked by the time father came home.

In the meantime we were surprised and delighted by the arrival of a colony of some twenty-five or thirty families of English half-breeds, who had transplanted themselves from the valleys of the Red and Assiniboine rivers to this of the Saskatchewan. I well remember the first Sunday service after their arrival, how abashed I felt in the presence of these people who could speak both English and Cree, and some of whom had had special advantages in education. But they listened attentively to my preaching in the mother-tongue, and were regular in attendance upon all our services. Their presence, too, made us feel that we were stronger and more able to withstand the enemy than we had been. Many of these people made good neighbors, and all were kindly disposed to the Mission and its work.

In the Red River country their bane had been the intoxicating cup. Here, far from the temptation, they hoped to better their circumstances. These also were buffalo people, and this was another consideration leading to their removal west. Immediately these people went to work to put up houses in the valley to the east of the Mission. I gave them to understand that the Indians desired the land to the west. It did us

good to see these humble homes being erected beside us. Mother and wife and sisters all rejoiced that in a measure our loneliness was past; that a semi-civilization at least had come to us.

Sometime in August we heard that father and party were not more than three days away, and with grateful heart I saddled up and set forth to meet them, which I did about fifty miles down the trail. Father had with him my brother David and sister Eliza. These we had left in Ontario five years before, mere boy and girl, but now they had grown into young manhood and young womanhood, and the long trip across the plains had done them a vast amount of good. My sister was rather astonished to meet her eldest brother clad as he was in leather and with long hair curling on his shoulders, but this was the western fashion, and anything else would have been singular at that time and amid those scenes.

Within a couple of days we were once more a united family and mother's joy was full. I was particularly pleased to note the manner of both my sister and brother towards my wife. The fact of her being a native did not in anywise affect the kindliness of their conduct towards her, for which I was very thankful.

CHAPTER X.

We return to Pigeon Lake—"Scarred Thigh" exchanged for "Blackfoot"—Planting Gospel seed—We organize a buffalo hunt—A moose chase—The buffalo as a "path-finder"—We encounter a hostile camp—All night on guard—My friend Mark's daring exploit—Wood Stonies visit the Mission—Gambling, polygamy and superstition among the Indians.

Now that father was home again I and my party were at liberty to start back to Pigeon Lake, which we did under instructions to remain there until the Indians should start out for the winter, when we were to return to Victoria. I was very sorry to part with Paul at this time, he having decided to go to the plains with the colony of half-breeds for the fall provision hunt. Also with him I separated from "Scarred Thigh," my horse for the last three years.

My readers in "SADDLE, SLED AND SNOWSHOE" will remember that I mentioned a horse called "Blackfoot," taken in battle, and the winner of many a long race. This horse had come to Paul through his wife. He had been stolen from him by those who thought that might was right, but Paul, being a plucky fel-

low, had taken him back, and as he had more or less trouble guarding the horse, I happened to suggest to him one day that we might make an exchange. He gladly accepted my offer, and now instead of "Scarred Thigh" I had the noted "Blackfoot." Nevertheless I was sorry to see the little sorrel go. Many a glorious gallop we had had together, and I had grown to love the gentle fellow. But Paul was a natural gentleman, and he also must be considered. In the meantime Muddy Bull had come in from the plains with our oxen and carts, the latter loaded with fine dried provisions. Quite a large camp also had come to the Mission, and from these father traded more provisions. Thus we did not start empty-handed on our return trip to the Western Mission at the lake.

Westward we rolled with our carts, every encampment our home for the time. Reaching the spot where we were detained by storm and sickness during the spring, we left the carts and packed on through the woods to the lake, where very soon our people began to settle down around us. Our gardens under the continued neglect now promised little resul for the earlier efforts; but the fish in the lakes were exceedingly plentiful, and upon these we almost altogether subsisted. Our dried provisions we were obliged to share with the wandering people

who came to us from the north and west, and who had not been out on the plains as we had We held meetings twice a day on week-days, and, I might almost say, all day Sunday. What our ministrations lacked in quality they fully made up in quantity. And some of those simple services were blessed seasons where souls were born into the kingdom of our Christ. The conjurer might sing and drum as he would, and the intensely conservative pagan decry us as he pleased, our work kept growing as the weeks passed in quick succession, one camp going and another coming to take its place, and we putting in our best efforts to sow the seeds of Christianity.

Presently some Mountain Stonies came to us, men whom I had never seen before. Among them was Mark, of whom I will have more to say as my narrative progresses. These brought word of buffalo near where the village of Lacombe now is, on the line of the Calgary and Edmonton Railway, and as my friend Jacob and his stalwart brothers and cousins were with us at the time, we concluded to take a run out for meat.

Mrs. McDougall remained at the Mission with a few of the older people, and the most of the rest started off early one day. With these I sent my pack-horses and necessary outfit, and with Jacob, Mark and others I followed in the after-

noon. Our course was around the north end of Pigeon Lake, then over the "divide" to Battle Lake, and thence down the Battle River. My companions and I had not yet reached the head of the lake, when we saw a big buck moose plunge into the water across the bay and strike out straight for a point of timber which was between us and the Mission. The huge animal was making quick time, and his great antlers and long ears were high out of the water as with strong strokes he cut through the lake.

The nature of the ground where we were was such that we could make better time on foot than with horses. Accordingly we left our mounts, and ran back a distance of about a mile to intercept the moose. I was on the spot some time before the next best, and as the big buck was coming straight for where I was in hiding, I fully expected to have the first shot; but while he was still more than a hundred yards away, and fairly rushing through the water by the force of his swimming power, and even as I stood behind a tree admiring the noble fellow, suddenly there came a shot from down the shore and the moose fell over almost without a struggle, being fairly hit just under the butt of his big antler. I jumped out on the beach, and looking in the direction of the report saw my friend Jacob quietly loading his old flint-lock, a significant

smile overspreading his face. I shouted to him, "If you did take my shot you made a very good one;" to which he answered, "It was enough for you to have left us in the race," and thus we were mutually appeased and complimented.

But meanwhile Mark had divested himself of his clothing and was swimming out to the moose, which he soon towed into the shallow water, where we all took hold and pulled the immense carcase up the bank. While Jacob and Mark skinned and cut him up I went back for our horses. Bringing them up, we packed most of the meat back to the Mission, and late in the evening again started after our party of hunters, whom we came up with away down Battle River. Holding an open-air service and stationing our guards, we went to sleep, and with the first dawn of day were astir again. Holding a short morning service, we very soon were jogging down the winding saddle-path which was but the adoption and endorsation by man of the buffalo-path of the preceding ages.

In the course of years I have travelled thousands of miles on buffalo-paths, and often I have wondered at and admired the instinctive knowledge of engineering skill manifested in the selection of ground and route made by those wandering herds of wild cattle. If one was in doubt as to a crossing let him follow the path of a buffalo.

Gladly have I often taken to these in the winter time, when the snow was deep. Taking off my snow-shoes, I have run behind my dog-train on the packed trail made by the sharp hoofs of the migrating buffalo. But alas! as I write these paths are about all that we have left to remind us that a short time since these vast plains fairly trembled to the roar and tread of these wonderful herds of nature's stock.

All day on the steady jog, our company of hardy men and women and little children rode down the valley of the Battle River on to Mossy Creek, thence on to Wolf Creek, and when in the evening we were expecting to see some buffalo, instead of these we met the small party Mark had come from, in hiding from a large camp of Blackfeet and Sarcees which in the meantime had come upon the scene. Again, alas for us, these enemies had driven the buffalo back, and, worse than this, were here in our vicinity in such numbers as to make our little party seem very small. As it was now evening we determined to select as strong a place of defence as possible for the night's bivouac. A brief search revealed a small thicket in a gently sloping hollow, with prairie all around it, into which we put the women and children, who, wearied with the hard day's travel, were soon sound asleep.

The night was dark and long, for it was now the late autumn. Before twilight came we saw the enemy and knew we were discovered; but though they surrounded us for a good part of the night, they knew that we were posted all around our camp, and did not venture to attack, though we fully expected them to do so about day-break. However, they concluded to draw off before that time. Providence and our strong position, and, doubtless, the prestige of the Stony and wood Indians, influenced them, for when day came our scouts brought the welcome word of their departure. Their big camp was south-west of us only some ten miles, and we set off rapidly eastward to lengthen the distance between us, and also, if possible, secure buffalo, so that we should not go home empty-handed.

It was during that long night that Mark, hearing me express my wish for a drink, took a small kettle, and, making his way stealthily through the lines of the enemy to a creek some distance beyond, surprised me by bringing back the kettle full of water. I was truly grateful for the refreshing draught, and could not but admire his pluck and scouting ability. Thus was begun a friendship which has continued through all these years. Full often in the bush and plain, in raging current and dangerous ford, Mark has been by my side, loyal and brave.

As we journeyed next day we saw the many trails made by the Blackfoot and Sarcee camps, and from these could estimate their numbers, which were sufficiently formidable to stimulate us to increase the intervening distance. We camped that night across the narrows of what was called "the lake which runs through the hills," a long narrow body of fresh water, heavily timbered on every side. Here we felt comparative security from the plain Indians, for these dread the woods. The next day we moved on down and across Battle River, below where now our Mission is situate, and were fortunate in killing several bulls, with which we had to rest content and return homewards. If the Blackfeet had not taken this circle into the western timber country, which at this season was an unusual course for them, we would have had great luck; but their large camp effectually drove the game from us. However, we were thankful that there had been no actual collision and no lives lost. As it was we took home a little bull's meat instead of the loads of prime cow's meat we had hoped to bring to reinforce the Mission larder.

Arriving at the lake we found all well, and noted that some more wood Stonies had come in. These latter were inveterate gamblers, and generally pretty wild fellows. Many of them were polygamists, and our hands were full doing

what we could to withstand heathenism and ignorance. There was no rest day or night while these people were beside us. I had often to act as judge and arbiter. Old quarrels, domestic and tribal, were brought to me, and these I had to settle as best I could. I also had to act as doctor and surgeon, which taxed to the fullest limit my small store of knowledge and experience in this line. But gamble and conjure and quarrel as they would, nevertheless these people would come to our services and listen with close attention. Slowly but surely the seed took root as the more thoughtful began to consider the Gospel message. One idea we had great trouble with was that they believed all sickness and death was caused by hatred amongst themselves. Some one, they thought, was working bad medicine or casting a blight or spell upon those who were taken sick or in some way met with death. This would generate a strong desire for revenge, and was a source of constant trouble to the early missionary.

One day when I had a large crowd of these people before me I said to them, "I have lived amongst different peoples, and in every case these at times have sickened and died, and from all I can learn this has been going on for thousands of years. These peoples expect this to take place at some time in their experience.

Everywhere I have travelled I have seen graveyards, and plenty of evidence that all men in the countries that I have been in are visited by death. But now I have come among a people who, if they did not hate one another, and work bad medicines and poison on one another, would live always—at least, that is what you think and how you talk. You are different from all other men. How is this? Has the Great Spirit treated you with partiality? His word says, 'God is no respecter of persons.' Are you not foolish to think and act as you do? Come, now, think about this, and ask the Great Spirit to give you light." So at service and in the lodge and around the camp-fire we kept at them; but the implantings of centuries cannot be shaken off in one or two generations.

CHAPTER XI.

We return to Victoria—War parties abroad—Father's influence over the Indians—We organize a big fresh meat hunt—David's first buffalo hunt—Mark's adventure with a war party—Surrounded by wolves—Incidents of our journey—Preparing for the winter.

Soon the autumn was past, the most of our wandering people had gone, and we made ready to travel back to Victoria. Mark, whose wife had died during the epidemic of the previous spring, left his motherless children with their grandparents and his brothers, and went with us. He said his heart was sore and he would go with us in order to be comforted.

Carefully we scouted past Edmonton, for this was the season of activity for the scalp-taker and horse-thief, but we reached the older Mission without any mishap. Here we found everybody busy at the necessary work of preparing for the winter, which always involved a considerable amount of labor. The usual excitement over the coming and going of war parties had taken place. Mother and sisters had spent days and nights in a sort of semi-terror because of the wild conduct of these people, which even Maskepetoon's strong

influence could not wholly control, though doubtless this grand old man's firm friendship for the white man, and especially for those of our Mission, was the main reason that no violence was attempted.

Under such conditions we were at times glad to see the large camps break up and in sections depart for a season. The great country around us gave the more turbulent and restless of these nomads a fine field wherein to work off their surplus energy in war and hunting. In the management of affairs during the presence of complex multitudes of wild men at the Mission father was well qualified to act prudently. He knew when to concede as well as to demand, and thus wisely never ran the risk of having his authority and influence brought into question. Moreover, he was a thorough democrat. To him an Indian was as good as any other man, and was given precisely the same treatment. There was none of "the inflated, superior style of man" in father's manner to anybody, either white or red. And this was very soon noticed by these "quick-sighted students of their fellowmen." He was a friend, and as such he became known among these western tribes.

Now the keen frosty nights were with us once more, and time was come for our fresh-meat hunt. In this we were joined by quite a number

of the half-breeds. Our pickets of guards were more numerous, and larger, and thus one did not come on duty so often, an appreciable change; for it was dismal work during those long cold nights moving about the silent camp, keeping vigilant watch and looking with pardonable longing for the morning.

Our course this time was south, and on the fourth day out we came upon the buffalo. At once the work of running, killing, butchering and hauling began. This was my brother David's first sight of this kind of game, and in the excitement he lost his hat and had to go the rest of the way bareheaded. But this was a small matter; many a man under like circumstances has lost his head for the time being. No wonder David lost his hat. The novelty and intense excitement of the whole thing and the hunter's rapture in bringing down such noble game was enough to make one's head too large for an ordinary hat.

Our camp of an evening would be a strange sight to one unacquainted with life on the plains. The huge fires, sides of ribs, heads of buffalos, marrow bones, squares of tripe, and other portions of the carcase, all in various processes of cooking; every man armed and fully ready for an attack; the guards occasionally coming within the glare of the camp-fire; horses and cattle

closely guarded, and a constant sense of insecurity evident on every hand; men with guns ready at hand eating and drinking, or mending harness, moccasins, or carts. After the evening song and prayer the men stretched themselves to sleep just as they had hunted and worked during the day. There was no taking off of moccasins or clothing. If one removed his powder-horn and shot-pouch he fastened both to his gun, so that with one quick grip he had the whole in his hand and was ready.

My three years of constant life of this kind had made me somewhat familiar with it, but to my brother, fresh from the quiet and security of Ontario, this whole life was a revelation. Nevertheless by heredity and instinct alike he took to it like a native.

When Sunday came we had been two days and a half among the herds and were pretty well loaded, and also pretty well tired, so that the Sabbath rest was exceedingly welcome. Breakfast and a short service, and all who could and were not on duty slept. In the afternoon strange Indians were sighted by our watchful guards, and my man Mark threw his lariat over the neck of "Ki-youkenos"—the big American horse that ran away with Peter in "SADDLE, SLED AND SNOWSHOE"—and before anyone could stop him was away on

the jump to reconnoitre more closely. In the meantime from our camp we could see these strangers gathering on the summit of a distant hill, and knew from their numbers and equipment that they were a war party. Mark, with only his lariat for a bridle, was going nearer to them at every jump. Those of us who knew the horse felt that there would be no stopping or turning him until he reached those men; and our hearts were in our mouths, so to speak, as we watched Mark's progress and realized his peril. We caught up our best horses, and saddling them as quickly as possible started after him. I well remember how I felt as with my horse bounding under me I made for that hill. Momentarily I expected to see the smoke of a flint-lock, and keenly I watched Mark as he sat on his flying steed, for pull up as he might I knew he could not stop him. In a few moments he was in the midst of the party, but to our great relief was given a friendly greeting instead of the fusilade we had feared. Presently he started to come back, and we pulled up our horses and waited to hear from him who these were.

When we met Mark told us that the strangers were plain Crees on the war-path, going into the Blackfoot country, and though unacquainted with us still they were the allies of our people.

Mark said they were coming down to visit us, so we returned to our camp. The war party came along in the course of an hour or so, and concluded to camp with us for the night, though I am sure no one in our party gave them a pressing invitation to do this. To be under the necessity of watching within as well as without your own camp becomes rather tiresome.

We put on double guards that night, and were relieved when our friends started away bright and early Monday morning, allowing us to go on with our hunt.

I have seen great numbers of grey wolves, but never, I think, did I see them more numerous than at this time. Troops of these native scavengers would hang around our encampment and prowl very close up during the long night watches. When we were butchering the animals we had killed, they would form a circle around us, and impatiently wait until we had our meat loaded into the carts. Then, as we moved away, they would rush in and scramble and fight for the offal which we left. Many a wild fight amongst them we witnessed, but as ammunition was none too plentiful, we seldom shot any.

Their howling, especially at night, was blood-curdling and terrifying to the inexperienced. Indeed, one could not at any time hear their deep, long, mournful notes without a lonesome

and uncanny feeling. There are two distinct kinds of these animals. The coyote and the big grey wolf belong to the plains and are altogether different from the timber or wood wolf. The latter can become dangerous, while the former never seem able to muster enough courage to attack human beings.

By the middle of the following week our carts were loaded to their utmost capacity and were rolling homewards. As the days were short we generally started long before daylight, and while I have had plenty of this ante-dawn travel I confess I never relished it. To roll out of your blankets into the keen cold of a young winter's morning, and then hastily roll up your bedding, place it in a cart, then rush out into the dark and catch and bring in the horses or oxen you drive, and with tingling fingers harness them into the carts committed to your care; and then as the leading cart begins to signal its onward move by its own peculiar squeak and squeal, to place your carts where they belong in the line of march; to come to ponds and creeks covered with ice as yet not strong enough to bear your weight, and yet through which you perforce must wade in order to secure the safe crossing of your loads, your wet moccasins and nether garments stiffening with the intense cold as you march,—I will say that while I in common with

most pioneers in our Canadian North-West frequently did this, still I am free to admit that I was never in love with it.

What a big market-square we have to take our winter's food from—hundreds of miles in length and breadth, with great widely distant valleys like stalls furnishing us with the food we seek, the quality of which depends on the skill of the hunter. And right here my friend Muddy Bull comes in as a reliable guarantor that what we take home will be first-class. On we roll. Our only delays are breaking axles and splitting felloes and snapping dowel-pins; but who cares for such trifles as these while we have the fresh green hides of the buffalos we have killed. The green hide serves as both wheelwright and blacksmith as it dries upon the weak portion of our vehicle. And while the kettle boils and the meat is roasting almost anyone in our party with axe and auger and saw will put a new axle in working trim. Ah! those were the days wherein to cultivate self-help and independence. The man who was not capable of this manner of evolution very soon drifted back into the older countries.

But here is the river and we are almost home. Fording our stock in the rapids, about half a mile down, we unload the meat, "pack" it over in a skiff, and taking some carts to pieces we

"pack" them over also in the skiff for use on the north side, leaving the rest until the ice-bridge forms. Then when all is safe on the stage at home we feel that unless a crowd of starving Indians come to us, we have our larder full for some time to come. And this was very satisfactory to us in those days when we were so far away from any outside help and so dependent on the movements of buffalo herds and contending tribes of Indians.

Sometimes the buffalo were far out on the great plains, and inaccessible to us; sometimes hostile Indians intervened, so that we dare not leave our people or in any way divide our forces; but the opening of the winter of 1865 found our stage loaded with prime meat and our party together and in the enjoyment of many blessings. There generally is in our northern country a short period which is neither summer nor winter, and if possible all travel ceases for a time. It would not be prudent to start out with horses, and without snow and ice dogs are of no use. This time we made use of by making ready for the winter. Buildings were to be repaired and washed over with white mud, which by the way is a very good substitute for lime. Hay was to be hauled, fire-wood to be cut in the log and hauled home, then to be sawed and split for use. In the meantime, as

now there was a permanent settlement at Victoria, and good congregations, meetings of various character had to be organized. Christianity, temperance, education, civilization must be inculcated, and on all these questions father was thoroughly alive. Then the snow fell and the ice made, and with Mark as my companion we began our evangelistic and missionary trips.

Our first was to Edmonton, and thence to Pigeon Lake, during which time we tried to preach the Gospel to white men and Crees and Stonies. Even then it was becoming easier for me to speak in Cree than in English. My brain and voice functions were almost in constant use in the former, and but seldom did I require them in the language wherein I was born. Steadily I was becoming able to give the glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus to others in the tongue and idiom of the language "wherein they were born."

CHAPTER XII.

A visit to Whitefish Lake—A devoted Indian missionary—Mark and I go out after buffalo—Mark proves himself a brilliant hunter—Our camp visited by wolves—Muddy Bull's generosity—We reach home with full loads of meat.

THE first or breaking-in trip for both men and dogs in the winter of 1865-66 was a three-hundred-mile run, and we lost no time between camps and posts. Although we had the roads to break, still the snow was not deep. Upon our return I took my wife over to Whitefish Lake to visit her parents and people, and we spent Sunday in Mr. Steinhauer's parish, where I learned more of the Cree language and acquired a clearer insight into the religious experience and life and language of these western people. As I have said before I will say here again, Mr. Steinhauer was an ideal missionary. He gave himself with entire devotion to his work. His best was always to the front, and God blessed his efforts. The cycles of eternity will reveal the good this faithful servant accomplished. It was always an inspiration to spend a few days on his mission.

Hurrying back to Victoria, we made a dash out to see where the camps were south and east of us, and finding some of these after a two days' run, we held a series of meetings with them, and shared in their shortage of provisions, for we found that the buffalo had gone far out and there had been considerable hardship in consequence. Moreover Blackfeet and southern Indians had made several successful raids, in which quite a number of horses had been stolen. There had been some reciprocity indulged in, too, by the wood and plain Crees, and these marauding parties had effectually driven the buffalo farther out. "But," said the old men, "cold weather is near, and the men will stay at home, and the buffalo will come into this north country"; a prophecy that we heartily hoped would prove true. We visited several camps and were cordially welcomed, our message being eagerly listened to. Many in these lodges heard for the first time the story of redemption.

It was on this trip that Mark and I, desiring to see for ourselves where the buffalo were, and if possible secure loads of meat to take home, started out bright and early one morning, and following a hunting trail, travelled fast plainward for the whole day. Just as night was setting in we met a small hunting party, and camping with them shared their hospitality, which, as

their hunt had been a poor one, was very meagre fare indeed. But even poor meat is better than none, and as these Indians told us of buffalo which they had not disturbed because they were discouraged with poor guns and bad shooting, we went to sleep that night fully determined to have a trial of our luck on the morrow. Accordingly with the first peep of day we were off, and, continuing southward, about ten o'clock came to the edge of a large plain, away out in the centre of which we could see quite a herd of buffalo. Going to the last point of timber, we tied our dogs in the centre of a large bluff and started out on the plain. The buffalo were about five miles distant, but as we had to keep under cover behind hills and along valleys and small gullies —sometimes having to crawl at full length for a considerable distance, where it was impossible to go otherwise without being seen by the advance scouts of the wary herd—it was late in the afternoon when we came within four hundred yards of the nearest buffalo. Here Mark after carefully scanning the lay of the land said to me, "You had better stay here, and I will try and approach alone. You can watch the movement of the herd and follow up after I have shot." So I shoved up a small hummock of snow before me and quietly watched a fine sample of scouting. Centuries of heredity and years of practice

were now in full play before my eager eyes. I was almost ravenous. Some poor meat eaten before daylight was all I had had to appease my hunger that day, and miles of travel in the sharp keen frosty air to where we left our dogs, and since then hours of running and walking and crawling to this point, had contributed to give me a tolerably keen appetite.

We wanted meat for urgent present need, and we wanted loads of it to take home, and now the whole matter looked exceedingly doubtful. Yonder were the lines of great bulls, some of them standing and others lying down, some feeding and others quietly chewing their cuds, but all on the alert. Beyond these huge sentinels and surrounded by them were the cows, the meat of which was the object of our quest.

Mark had but a smooth-bore single-barrelled flint-lock. No long distance shooting for him. He must get close. He must pass through the line of bulls. Could he do it? That was the question on my mind as I moved from side to side on my frozen snowy couch. With his white blanket belted around him, and the upper half covering his head and shoulders, Mark was steadily making towards the herd. Fortunately the day was calm, so that the danger of giving scent was small. For interminable periods, as it seemed to me, I lost sight of my companion, and

then in a totally unexpected quarter he would reappear, but always nearer to our game. Now he was among the bulls, and I almost held my breath as I saw him push himself past a great big fellow where a blow from horn or hoof might be instant death to the brave hunter. But with consummate skill he made his way past the bull and was right in amongst the great black fellows and quite lost to sight.

Darkness was coming on fast, and the suspense to me as I lay watching became almost unbearable. Cold, anxiety, hunger, each was doing its work on brain and heart and stomach. But presently I saw the whole herd start, and there came in sight a puff of smoke, followed by the report of Mark's first shot, and away I went after the flying buffalo. As I ran I heard another report, and then I came suddenly upon a dead cow. Concluding that this was the result of Mark's first shot, and that in good time he would come back to this point, I set to work to skin the carcase, and was thus engaged when I heard Mark approaching. He was glad to see me, and I delighted at his return in safety. He had killed two cows. This one we were at was his first. Then as the buffalo bunched up and fled he had run to one side and, reloading, had continued running until the herd slowed up. He had then drawn in under cover and shot the second cow.

I admired his pluck and skill and speed, and told him so, but he only quietly replied, "These cows are fat, John, and we will have better meat to-night than we had last night."

We were now on the southerly edge of the plain, and about eight miles from where we left our dogs early in the day. After brief deliberation it was decided that Mark should remain to butcher the cows and look up the nearest camping place, while I should cross the plains and bring back our dogs.

Taking my direction, I availed myself of buffalo trails in the snow as much as possible, and when I left one to cross country to another, I marked the spot as strongly as I could upon my memory, and took my bearings of the place as well as I could in the winter's darkness which surrounded me.

In a very short time I was at the bluff and found the dogs. Unfastening them I brought my train, with old Draffan still in the lead, and put them on my track, and then brought out Mark's train and shouted, "Marse, Draffan!" and away we went. Fortunately there was no wind, and though the night was dark Draffan's instinct and my memory as to where to cross from one buffalo path to another worked well. Once or twice I stopped the dogs and struck a match, and was delighted to find we were on a

hard buffalo path. Thus we came at a good pace back to where the first cow was. But before we reached the spot Mark came looming up out of the darkness to meet us. The faithful fellow had been anxious; and now he thought it was his turn to tell me that I had done well in finding the dogs and returning them quick and straight.

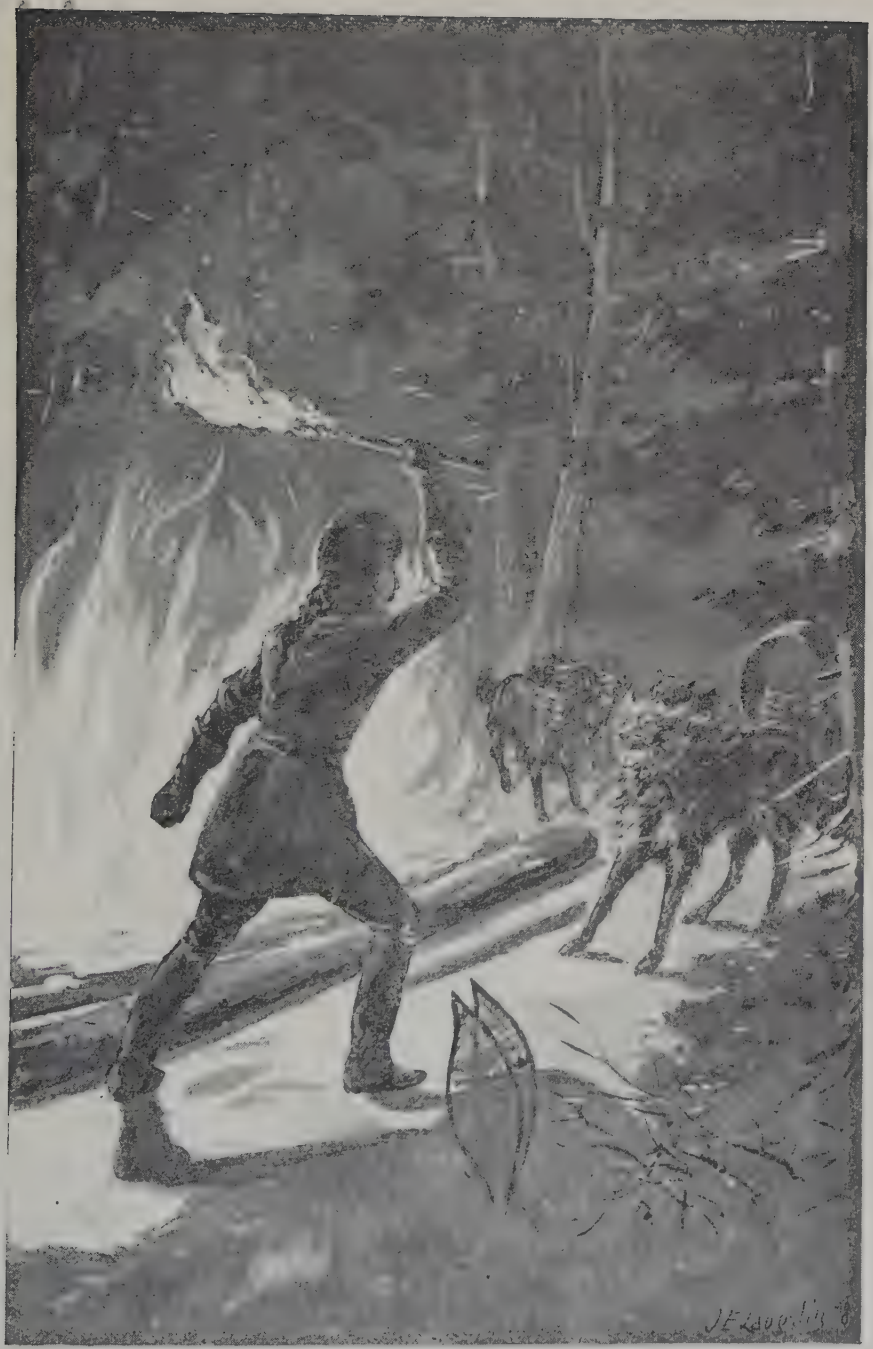
We used the hide of the cow as a floor for our camp, and soon we had a cheerful fire and meat cooking and dogs fed; and though it was long past midnight before we finished our meal and were ready for bed, yet with light hearts we sang a hymn and knelt in prayer and thankfully rested.

We were now four days' journey from the Mission, but we had found the people and also the buffalo. We had loads of good cow meat to take home, where our supply was rapidly getting low, and as we turned under our blankets in that small bluff, with the canopy of the sky as our roof and the horizon as our walls, it might be cold, it certainly was isolated, and yet we were happy in the satisfaction of success. I, a Scotch-and-English-Canadian, and my Mountain Stony friend, I believe, did that early morning more than ever before appreciate the kingliness of God and the brotherhood of man.

When daylight came Mark went out to see how the meat of our second cow had fared, for

prairie wolves and coyotes were in great numbers around us. Mark had built a great fire before he left, and I was lazily dozing beside it waiting for his return, when presently there was a great commotion amongst our dogs. Jumping up, I saw a monster wolf just across the fire. He was snapping and snarling at the dogs, who were barking at him with much vigor, but prudently not venturing to attack him. For this I was abundantly glad, as undoubtedly he had some distemper or he would not have thus come into our camp. I could have shot him, but I was afraid to do so lest in his death-struggles he might wound some of our dogs: so I went at him with firebrands, and after some effort was glad to see him continue his course through the bluff.

When Mark returned he reported that some of the meat had been taken by the wolves, but that these had come to the animal just a little before him, and had not had time to take much. We then hurriedly ate our breakfast and drove over to where the meat was, took this on, and started for home. Notwithstanding our loads we made good time, and reached the outer camp of Indians about 9 p.m. We found that Muddy Bull, who had been away on the chase while we passed, had returned and, as usual with him, had made a great hunt. He generously supple-



"I went at him with firebrands." (*Page 126.*)

mented our loads with tongues and backfats and bosses, so that when we left his camp that night we were well provisioned. Continuing our journey we passed several small camps *en route*, and stopping about 2 a.m., slept for a few hours and were away again by daylight. Pushing on, we reached home the third day of the return journey, bringing word of Indians and buffalo, which missionaries and traders and settlers were all delighted to hear.

CHAPTER XIII.

A run to Edmonton—Mr. Hardisty and other Hudson's Bay Company officers spend New Year's with us—Sports and amusements—Our party sets out for Mountain House—I experience a "scare"—Intense cold—A cunning dog—Mishaps to a cariole—In the foot-hills—My first view of the Rockies—Hearty reception at Mountain House—Back to Victoria.

It was now the middle of December, and father arranged to spend a Sabbath in Edmonton before the winter holidays came on. I went as cariole driver, and Mark brought on the provision and baggage sled. A little more than a day and a half brought us to the fort, and while we were there Mr. Hardisty and party arrived from the Rocky Mountain House. This fort and trading-post had been abandoned by the Hudson's Bay Company for some years, but in the summer of 1865 it was decided to reopen it in order to draw the trade of the surrounding Indian tribes —Blackfeet and Bloods, Piegans and Sarcees— as also to keep these turbulent tribes as much as possible from collision with the wood and plain Crees, their hereditary foes.

Mr. Hardisty had been put in charge of this enterprise, and with a large complement of men

and an ample outfit, had gone overland during the autumn to the site of the abandoned post. A temporary fort was built in the woods near by, and his men were now taking out timber and sawing lumber preparatory to the erection of permanent buildings during the next season. The old fort had been the scene of many a fight between the contending tribes, and as the Hudson's Bay Company invariably followed a "peace policy," not only between themselves and the various tribes, but also in preserving amity among the different races, they had given up the fort and in so doing lost a large portion of the southern trade. But now that the Crees had moved farther east, Victoria had become an important post, intermediate between Edmonton and Fort Pitt, and the reasonable conclusion presented itself that the Blackfeet and southern trade might now again be secured by rebuilding the Mountain Fort.

Mr. Hardisty and Messrs. McAuley and MacDonald returned with us to spend the holidays at Victoria, father having promised to go to the Mountain Fort directly after New Year's day, for the two-fold purpose of meeting the Mountain Stonies, who were expected there then, and also of marrying Mr. McAuley to Miss Brazeau, the daughter of the second officer in charge of the fort.

On our return trip to Victoria, in company with the Hudson's Bay officers, we did not camp, but leaving Edmonton in the evening we journeyed all night, reaching Victoria early next morning. As I had father in my cariole, and the rest of the party were comparatively light, the run of between ninety and a hundred miles was a hard one for my team. But old Draffan and his driver did not come in last by any means.

Readers of "FOREST, LAKE AND PRAIRIE" will remember that in the autumn of 1862 Gladstone and I began this place. In loneliness sublime our leather lodge stood on the north bank of the big Saskatchewan. Little more than three years have passed, and this is now the rendezvous of several large camps of Indians. Wood and plain Crees and wood Stonies have frequented the spot. A colony of some twenty-five families of English half-breeds have settled beside us. The Hudson's Bay Company have established a post alongside the Mission. The Mission party has been augmented by the arrival of father and mother, and part of the family from Norway House, and of my brother and sister from Ontario. I have taken unto me a wife, and we are no more alone at Victoria.

The holidays of 1865-66 were full of pleasurable excitement. Religious services and literary

entertainments and concerts occupied the evenings, and out-door games, such as football, snowshoe and dog-train races and foot races, were provided for the day. Thus the fun and enjoyment were kept up. Then came watch-night with its solemnity and New Year's day as the culmination of our feasting and innocent frolic.

The second day of January, 1866, found us driving our dog-teams westward for the Mountain House. Again I had father and the cariole as far as Edmonton, and from that point we had the Chief Factor of the Saskatchewan District, William Christie, Esq., as one of our company.

The distance between Edmonton and the Mountain House is 180 miles. We left the fort about four o'clock one dark morning, our train comprising in all nine sleds. I had a load of baggage, a portion of which gave me quite a start. As I jumped on the sled while going down a gentle slope, there seemed to be a living, moving object lashed in my load, for it moved under my moccasined feet. Instantly I sprang into the snow, and then it flashed upon me that it was a bag of mashed potatoes which a friend was sending to the Mountain House and which had not yet frozen. I laughed at my scare, but at five o'clock on a dark stormy morning in a narrow winding forest path, a very little will

startle one. The cold was intense, a keen cutting wind making us keep a sharp lookout for frost-bites. The road was drifted and very heavy, so that when night came on we were glad enough to make camp, which we pitched in a spruce grove at the eastern base of the Woodpecker Hills.

Pile on the logs as we would, still the cold was bound to assert itself, and our clothing alternately steamed and froze as we turned before that fire. The Chief Factor and father, who had been constrained to sit in one position in their coffin-like carioles since five o'clock in the morning, were now making up for it by indulging in lively anecdote and joke and repartee. Pemmican and hot tea went a long way towards heating the internal man, and the great fire did something for our extremities. But the cold was omnipresent. In great chunks, in morsels, in atoms, it was all about us. You could reach out and grasp it. You could shiver in your clothes and feel it. You could almost smell it and see it, and you could hear it plainly enough as with might and force it strained the very earth and made the forest monarchs crack as if these were so many ends to its lash.

Hours before daybreak we were climbing the hills and crossing the ice-bound creeks and lakes, and those of us who had loads or

carioles to drive were "running with patience" (at times) "the race set before us." The bridegroom-elect being the shortest-legged of the party, and I doubt not the shortest-winded also, generally brought up the rear. Even if he started out ahead, or in the middle of the procession, before many miles were passed he fell behind. The law of gravitation was doing its work. From the rear at frequent intervals would come the shout to Pat (his leading dog), "Marse!" uttered with a strong Scotch accent.

Pat was a big white dog with a short bobtail. He also had a peculiar twist of the head and a squint of the eye which gave him a wise, knowing appearance. If he had lived in these latter days, and become possessed of eye-glasses, doubtless he would have been given a degree! The shrewd fellow seemed to know that his master was on an important mission, and the dignity of leading a train the owner and driver of which was on his way to be married, was fully apparent to "His Dogness." His demeanor *en route* and around camp was simply taking. Pat and his master gave us endless fun on that trip. When these would come up, which was generally after camp was made, the Chief Factor, the Chairman of the Hudson's Bay Missions, and the rest of our party became all attention, and Pat and his master were the

centre of joke and fun. Their account of the morning's or afternoon's run (I say *their*, for Pat would by nod and look confirm his master's recital) was sure to "bring the house down." We were unanimously thankful during the days and nights of that very cold trip for the stimulating presence of Pat and our short-limbed bridegroom-elect.

During our second afternoon's run, while making through a rough country, we came to an exceedingly sidling place in the trail. Having sent my own load past and helped father over it, I thought I would wait and see what our rear-guard was doing. After some time I heard "Marse, Pat!" coming from the little Scot's big lungs (for have you not noticed that Nature in the nice balance of her equity generally gives the little man a big pair of lungs), and soon Pat hove in sight, his tongue protruding, and the breath from his big mouth making little clouds of frozen vapor in the sharp cold air. The cunning old dog was making the appearance of doing it all, but all the while I could see that his traces were slack.

Soon dogs and sled were on the sidling road down the hill, and over went the cariole and down the slope rolled its contents. Pat and his companions felt the load lighten, and just then remembered that they were far behind, and in

vain my friend shouted "Whoa, Pat, whoa!" On went the train, and now I came upon the scene. The bridegroom-elect shouted, "Catch those dogs, John! I say, John, stop those dogs!" Laughing as I ran, I caught and pulled Pat up, righted the cariole and held the train while the little Celt gathered up the fragments, which I saw largely consisted of presents from Edmonton friends to the marriage supper, now nearly two days nearer in view than when we started.

Nicely cut roasts of beef and pork, bottles of wine, and sundry parcels lay around in sweet confusion. It took some time to gather them up and pack them in place in that parchment-sided, primitive vehicle; and all this time his owner was discoursing on Pat's good qualities —"were it not for his big load he would take the lead," etc. After a time everything was adjusted again, and on we went, camping that night among the rolling hills west of Blindman's River.

Another "stingo" night and away long before day. Roads heavy, snow deep, day so cloudy and stormy that the promised view of the Rockies failed to realize. There were some of us in the party who had travelled far and wide in the North-West for from five to fifteen years, and as yet had not seen the mountains. We were now looking keenly for the first glimpse of them,

but the third night came, and still because of cloud and storm we had not beheld them.

Our camp that night was made on the wooded summit of a foot-hill. We were climbing the world fast. If it had been moonlight or clear daylight we would have looked upon a sea of mountains, but darkness and storm and smoke were our portion instead. The smoke from our camp-fire found no vacuum in the overhanging atmosphere, but on the contrary was pressed to the ground about our camp. In fact the conditions were such that I think of that "hill summit camp" as one of the more disagreeable experiences of my frontier life. Gladly we left it while hours of the long night were still unspent, and as daylight came we were ascending another big foot-hill, from the summit of which I first beheld the glorious old Rockies.

Spellbound and in rapture I gazed upon the sublime spectacle before me. How supremely beyond my largest imaginings those lofty ranges stood revealed to the delighted senses. The clouds had disappeared, and in clear, distinct outline hundreds of snow-clad peaks stood out as if cut by a mighty diamond upon the dimly lighted morning sky. The beauty of the scene intensely moved me. The majesty and power apparent were most satisfying to my soul. The God who made these made me also. I felt

exultant in the thought. But now the morning sun had clearly risen, and as I looked the highest peaks were illumined as by electric touch, and scores of great beacon-fires seemed to have sprung into instantaneous being. And the great picture quickly grew. Snow-clad summit and glacier glint and granite wall and forest growth speedily became transformed as with the touches of a million brushes. Halos of light, radiant and grandly bright, spread themselves upon the mighty canvas. In rapture I beheld and worshipped. I had seen a glimpse of the glory of the Eternal, and still I lived. As I reluctantly left the scene and ran to catch up with our party over the foot-hills and across the wide valley beyond, I was elated above measure. What matter the cost in travel and cold and extreme hardship, I had seen the mountains, and the sight would be a perennial blessing in my life.

When I came up to our party they were already descending the sloping bank of the Saskatchewan. Miles of this, and then an almost perpendicular jump or slide, and we were on the ice of the river, following up which for a couple of miles we reached the temporary fort.

It was early morn, but up went the flag, and the little metropolis was all excitement in consequence of our arrival. The Chief Factor in those days was supreme in his own district. And

what a district! From below the junction of the two Saskatchewans it stretched to the Columbia, and from the forty-ninth parallel it extended to the north tributaries of the Peace River. Father's field was still larger, in that it stretched eastward down to below Oxford House and close to Hudson Bay.

No wonder the roughly built but strongly made fort was *en fete* when such ecclesiastical and commercial dignity came suddenly upon it. Our welcome was hearty, and that of our "rearguard" doubly so. We were fortunate in meeting here numbers of Mountain Stonies and Blackfeet, hardy, muscular mountaineers and wild plain Indians, both comparatively new types to me.

The temporary fort was built on a low flat near the river. The permanent new fort was to be placed on a higher bench. I found that the site of Mountain Fort was about sixty miles from the real base of the mountains and on the north bank of the North Saskatchewan.

We spent a Sabbath at the fort. Father held services for both whites and Indians. In due time the marriage was solemnized, and the wedding supper eaten, and we began our return journey. As the cold had intensified there was no loitering by the way, and early the third day we were back at Edmonton. Sixty miles per

day was not bad travelling in such hard weather. The last night we left camp about midnight. I wrapped father in his cariole and kept it right side up until we stopped for breakfast. The next day we started for Victoria, and camping once, arrived there early the second day, right glad to be at home once more.

CHAPTER XIV.

Home occupations—A course of lectures—Mark and Jimmie as *raconteurs*—Mark's success as a deer-killer—A buffalo chase on a dog-sled—Our first child is born—Chickens at eight shillings apiece !

THE big open fire-places in the Mission house were delightful spots beside which to spend a few hours after a trip such as we had just concluded : but such was the extent of our moving circuit, and such our circumstances, that we could spare but very few hours at home. Many camps must be visited and many mouths must be fed. Mark and I and a lad named Jimmie Horn were kept pretty constantly on the move, now bringing in loads of fresh meat, and the next trip loads of dried provisions wherewith to make pemmican for summer use. We generally managed to keep Sunday in some Indian camp or at the Mission. If the former, the whole day was one continuous series of meetings. I would go from one chief's tent to that of another, and the respective followers would crowd the lodges while I did my best to tell the pagan and barbarous people the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

Many a night, at the close of a long day's run, I would give informal lectures on civilization and education, telling my eager listeners what Christianity was doing for man in other parts of the world; and all this time I was learning the language and studying the people. Old men and painted and feathered warriors and the youth of these camps crowded the lodges in which I made my temporary home. There was no rest while in Indian camps, and not until we were in our own seven-by-eight-foot hole in the snow, with wood cut and carried and piled at hand and dogs fed, would I sit down to rest both mind and body, and be free for a time from the inquisitive and eager listening and questionings of these people to whom we were sent. Then Mark and Jimmie would take their turn. Jimmie was a lad of nimble legs, but of much nimbler tongue. Had he not come from the famous Red River? He had even visited old Fort Garry, and he would fairly take Mark's breath as he drew from the range of his wide experience.

Mark would tell of the mountains, and grizzlies and panthers and avalanches, and encounters with the enemy, till Jimmie's eyes would bulge with excitement. I would look on and listen and rest. Then before retiring Mark would lead in prayer in his mother-tongue,

which neither Jimmie nor myself could understand, though we always said "Amen."

During short intervals at the Mission Mark made several hunting excursions, and killed some moose and deer. One night he came home and reported one moose killed and another wounded. Early next morning we went out and killed the wounded moose and brought the meat of both home. Another time he killed two deer, and brought back word that the forest was so dense the meat would have to be packed to the river some miles above. Accordingly he and I took our dogs and drove up the river opposite to where the deer lay. Fastening the dogs, we struck into the forest, and coming across fresh tracks of more deer, we went after these and killed two more. It was midnight before we had packed the meat of the four deer to the place where our dogs and sleds were. Hard work it was, but the venison was good, and our larder was handsomely replenished.

All that winter the wood Cree camps were from one hundred to one hundred and fifty miles distant from the Mission. The buffalo kept out south of these camps, and sometimes were a long distance from them. But now that there was a regularly established post beside the Mission, trading parties and settlers and Indians kept passing to and fro, giving us comparatively

good roads, and thus enabling us to travel quickly. Once well loaded with either dried provisions or fresh meat, we lost no time on the road.

It was on one of the trips we made at this time that we were stopping for the day in Ka-kake's camp, which was situated beside a pound for catching buffalo, when, hearing of another cluster of lodges some ten or twelve miles distant, I made a run over to see the people, and while coming back the same afternoon I ran across a fine herd of buffalo. As my leader was obedient to the word, I thought "now is my chance to run that herd over to the pound." I had no load whatever on the sled, so I gripped the ground-lashing with both hands and feet, and sent the dogs after the herd, or rather to one side of it. My dogs went into the hunt most heartily, and sometimes brought me dangerously near to the flying mass. Then I would get them under control again, and on we went from side to side, but always nearing the point of timber where the pound was. Presently we came within the lines of "dumb-watchers," and now these helped us, and I kept looking, when I could spare a glance, to see some move in camp. But as the lodges were behind the bluff, and the Indians did not look for buffalo at the time, no one saw us until

it was too late to prepare and run the herd into the pound; so, after bringing the buffalo close up to camp, I had the bitterness of seeing them break through the "head sentinels" and dash away.

But what a ride I had that afternoon, my big dogs jumping together, and with long leaps making the sled leap also. It required a firm grip to stay on that narrow sled, and also dexterous poising to keep right side up. Down hills, across valleys, over knolls, jumping the rough frozen snow where thousands of buffalo had rooted and tramped only a few days before, certainly that was a toboggan ride with a race against a herd of buffalo thrown in; and the only disappointment was that after bringing the bunch to the pound, the Indians were not there to receive them.

When Ka-kake came in that evening he loudly lamented that we had not been seen in time, for, said he, "It would have given a name to this part of the country and to my camp, and men would have pointed to this as the place where John brought buffalo into the pound with his dog-train."

One day in February, 1866, while I was at home, my mother, coming down stairs, congratulated me on the birth of a daughter, and when I knew that mother and child were well I mentally

and consciously made a step forward in being. It was as God would have it. We gave our first-born the good old Scotch name of Flora, which also belonged to my youngest sister.

About the middle of March father made another pastoral visit to Edmonton, and as we remained over for Monday, I went out to St. Albert, the Roman Catholic Mission north of Edmonton, to find, if I could, some domestic chickens, as mother had often expressed a strong desire for some. It took me all day to drive about twenty-five miles and find the chickens and buy them, the latter two enterprises being the most difficult of the three. At last I purchased three birds, two hens and a cock, paying for them eight shillings each—six dollars to start a poultry farm in our part of the country !

Wild-duck eggs were very good in their place, but unfortunately for cooking purposes these were generally some way on in the process of incubation before we obtained them, and mother with her eastern ideas did long for a few fresh eggs occasionally.

I was quite proud of my purchase, but was rather taken aback when at the supper table that evening the august Chief Factor inquired of me what I had paid for those chickens, and when I told him eight shillings each, he poohpoohed the whole thing ; and while I was not

prepared for such criticism, I could but answer that this was largely a matter of sentiment, that I had often been where if I had it I would have given all that to hear a cock crow. The old gentleman gave me up as incorrigible. However, to the credit of humanity it must be said that we are not all Peters. The crow of a cock or the tinkling of a cow-bell often have been as sweetest music in the ear of a poor lost traveller.

CHAPTER XV.

David and I visit Lac la Biche—High-priced seed wheat—Our party sets out for Pigeon Lake—Old Joseph—Paul Chian—Samson—Our larder depleted—We organize a hunt—Precarious living—Old Paul proves himself a skilful guide—Samson tells of a tragic murder by Blackfeet—We move cautiously—Broiled owlets as a delicacy—I shoot an elk—Little Paul's flint-lock hangs fire—Samson's brilliant hunting feats—Feasting on antlers.

JUST before the winter was breaking up, my brother David and myself made a trip to Lac la Biche to try if we could procure some seed wheat. The Roman Catholic priest was the only person who had any to dispose of, and we traded a few bushels from him, giving him pemmican pound for pound. Very dear wheat that, costing us, independent of freight, at least ten cents per pound, besides a two hundred mile tramp to get it. But we needed it, and it was good grain. The reader will notice that here was wheat grown eight hundred miles west of the Red River, and one hundred miles north of the North Saskatchewan!

The spring was now upon us, the Indians were coming in in large numbers, and the time

was at hand for our going back to Pigeon Lake in accordance with our promise to the Crees and Stonies. Therefore our small party, consisting of my wife and young child, an elderly widow and her boy of some seven or eight years, and Mark and myself, bade the rest of the Mission party good-bye, and crossing the Saskatchewan just before the ice broke up, turned our faces westward on the southern trail. As food was limited, and our means of transport by no means large, we hunted on our way as much as possible, saving what dried provisions we had for future use. Ducks and rabbits formed the principal part of our fare. In due time we were at the end of the cart-road, and then packing the rest of the way we came to the new Mission, and found some Indians there already waiting for us.

Among these were old Joseph and Paul Chian, the latter a French half-breed, but a staunch Protestant. The readers of "SADDLE, SLED AND SNOWSHOE" will remember Joseph as a consistent Sabbatarian and a really plucky fellow. Paul but now comes on the scene of our narrative. He was a true man, and having embraced Christianity and espoused Protestantism, was invaluable to me. These and others heartily welcomed us, and our daily meetings were seasons of blessing.

Camp after camp came in, mountain and

wood Stonies and Crees—pagans and Christians—ours was a truly cosmopolitan gathering. Gambling and conjuring, heathen feasts and our own singing and preaching and praying were interchanging exercises of day and night. When I was not holding meetings or attending councils I was hunting or fishing, or trying to garden; but as to the latter, our means were limited and seeds few.

Among the wood Crees who came to us for the first time was one called Samson. He was old Paul's son-in-law, and he and I became fast friends from the first. There was an instinctive understanding between us.

By the middle of May our nomadic congregation was scattering to the four winds. We had done what we could in sowing the seeds of truth and righteousness, as we understood it, though we were but babes ourselves in this great matter. All we could do was to leave our disappearing congregation to the Lord.

In the meantime, as provisions were low, we concluded to pitch away on a hunting expedition, some six or seven lodges accompanying us on the trip. In our party were old Paul and Samson. As ours was what might be called a wood-hunt, it would not be practicable to go in large parties, for the reason that the food supply would be a difficulty. Drying some fish to start

with, we left the lake and struck eastward across Battle River, below where our present Mission is situated. Though we were constantly on guard, day and night, yet we did not apprehend that the enemy were near, knowing that the buffalo were far out on the plains and that this was not the usual season for war parties.

Our living for the first week or two was very precarious. We had with us my first cow, one I had traded from old Joseph. As there was no one left at the lake, we had to take her along with us: but as she gave no milk she was only a care and burden to the party. Rabbits, ducks, geese, owls, hawks, bear, beaver, badger, porcupine, skunk—there was certain variety in our bill of fare, but there was no certain quantity of it. Sometimes we were filled, and oftentimes we were empty, not knowing when or how we should get our next meal. Our mode of transport was on horseback or on foot. As yet there were no cart or waggon roads in or out of the Pigeon Lake country. Old Paul, who was an invalid and could move only with difficulty because of some spinal trouble, but who knew that part of the country as other men knew their quarter-sections, sat on his horse and led the way. Part of our able-bodied hunters scouted along the line of march, while the others struck out on either hand in search of game.

Our whole camp, as to food supply, was communistic—we shared alike.

Weather permitting and provisions allowing it, we generally held two services in the day. In the early morn, while the dew was on the grass, we sang our hymns and knelt together in prayer. And in the evening in camp, when the hunters had come in and our horses were picketed or driven close and hobbled, again we met. I would read a few verses and comment on them, and with hymn and prayer we closed the day. And old Paul, life-long warrior and scout and hunter, what delightful sites he chose for our camp! Security, utility and beauty were sure to harmonize in his selection. Beside rippling stream or glistening lakelet, with growing grass and budding flowers and leafy foliage, with Mother Nature's breath full and fragrant of early summer, how like hallowed sanctuaries those camping spots were! Verily God blessed us as we journeyed, and souls were born again.

Samson and I were inseparable in those days. I wanted to be the friend of all, but I could not help being his friend. We became brothers in the regular native style, and cemented a bond which continues unto this day.

Soon after we crossed the Battle River, one beautiful morning, bright and early, Samson and old Paul's son, whom we called "little Paul,"

and myself left our camp to come slowly on, while we set out on a scouting and hunting trip in advance. Steadily we jogged over hill and plain, through a lovely park-like country, Samson quietly regaling us with hunting and war exploits. On the brow of a mossy knoll, which still showed the travois markings which proved it to have been an old Blackfoot trail, Samson paused, and pointing to a spot just in front of us, said: "Right here one of the bravest of our men was slain. Crowds were in ambush for him, and, knowing the man, did not give him the slightest chance to resist. He was a Mountain Stony and an old friend of mine. He was one of that kind who know no fear. Men or beasts, it was all the same. Here he died, and the Blackfeet say that while they killed him he smiled upon them. He was one of those who listened to the first praying men." As we rode along past the spot where the brave man had died, one could not help but grip his gun and keep a sharp look-out, for the same conditions still governed this whole country.

As we had set out without a mouthful of provision, and now had ridden some hours, I began to feel hungry. Fortunately about noon we came athwart an owl's nest, one of the largest kind, and though it was up in the top of a tall tree, we could see that the owlets were large.

Little Paul climbed the tree and brought them down. There was one apiece, and in a very little time they were roasting on willow "broiling sticks" before a quick fire. The birds were fat and juicy, and most agreeably eased the pangs of hunger, after which we proceeded with better spirits. Our course was straight out toward the big plains. We did not see any game, nor did we stop to hunt, as Samson desired to travel a certain distance in order to determine if possible the presence or non-presence of hostile camps.

Late in the evening we camped in a secluded spot. Little Paul drew the load from his flint-lock, and putting in small charges of powder and shot, killed some rabbits, which we roasted for our supper. Tethering our horses close, little Paul and I stood guard the first part of the night. After midnight Samson went on guard while we slept, and with the first peep of day he woke us; but before we were fairly astir he said, "If we do not meet during the day, we will meet at this place to-night," and he was away. Little Paul and I saddled up and started out on our own line. We rode quietly, listening intently for a shot from Samson's gun. Presently as the sun was freshly gilding the hills, making millions of crystal dew-drops to reflect his rays, I caught sight of something over the brow of a knoll at the edge of some timber. We cautiously

scouted for a closer view, and there before us were two large buck elk feeding on the browse and leaves.

"Now, John, this is your chance," whispered my companion, and alighting from our horses we fastened them and crawled towards the elk. When we could see them plainly, we found that one was much larger than the other, and little Paul said to me, "You fire at the big fellow, and I will take the other." We were now at the end of our cover, and rising up I let drive at the larger of the two. But when little Paul attempted to shoot, his treacherous old flint-lock hung fire, and both man and beast had moved before it went off. Both elk jumped into the thicket, and reloading we rushed in after them. We soon came upon mine, still standing, but badly hurt. I let him have another shot, and this finished him. The other was gone on the jump through the woods.

My companion and I straightened the dead elk for skinning, and then went for our horses. Having done this we began to skin and cut up our game, of course keeping watch all the time. Samson's blood-curdling facts, related so recently, made us more than ordinarily watchful, for we knew that our three shots fired in quick succession would be heard a long way in the clear morning air.

"Rising up I let drive at the larger of the two." (*Page 154.*)

We had scarcely got started at the work of skinning the elk, when the uneasiness of our horses indicated some movement in sight. We seized our guns and sprang to see what it was, when to our delight Samson rode up. "Well, what luck?" he asked. We showed him our "kill," and told him of the other elk. He said he had killed a large jumping deer, but that hearing our shots he had galloped to see what was the matter. "And now I am here," he added, "I will leave my horse with you and go on the track of the elk." Saying which, away he sprang into the thicket on the trail of the flying beast.

We were not half through with our task when we heard a shot, and presently Samson was back with us to report the death of the other elk. "Now," said he, "the carcase is about half way from here to where my deer lies. Let us pack this one over to his comrade, and then have our breakfast, after which we can cache the meat of the three animals and take the hides and part of the meat and strike back to camp."

As he was the captain of our hunt this was done. We had breakfast on elk horn and bits of tripe and the marrow of the shank bones. Then we made a temporary staging in the shade and packed our meat on it, taking care to secure it against the tireless wolverine. We

also covered the meat with boughs laden with fresh leaves, and then with a hide on each saddle and a supply of meat we started back and found our people camped not far from where we had fared so sumptuously the day before on broiled owlets.

The next day, while our camp moved steadily out, little Paul led a party of one from each lodge to bring in the meat from our cache. Samson went the other way on foot into a dense hill of timber which was situate west of us, and in the evening after we had camped he came in with the nose of a moose and some other tit-bits on his back. We were now beginning to live! The next day I went with Samson for the meat of the moose. We found this in a forest on the bank of a beautiful fresh-water lake. We lunched beside the carcase, and when we were through our meal Samson said, "You do not need me to take the meat home. I will take a turn through the timber." The result was that in the evening he brought in another moose nose, this time that of a big buck. Both moose and elk were in the season when their antlers were growing and were covered by a kind of plush or velvet which was considered very good eating. We would cut the antlers from the head and throw them into the fire, when the plush would singe off and each antler

point split open in the process of cooking. The portion which split open, and all the skin covering on the antler, were thought good food.

It seemed passing strange that the enormous antlers of both moose and elk should be of but a few months' growth. Nevertheless this was a fact, as on this trip I saw the horns or antlers in various stages of growth, and later on in complete condition.

CHAPTER XVI.

Samson and I go on a moose hunt—Samson's clever tracking—He comes up with the moose and tries a shot—No bullet in the gun—Two dejected hunters return to the camp—We have better luck next time—Roses make a thorny path—We disturb a band of wolves—Samson stampedes them with his riding-whip—"Firing Stony" and I go hunting—I bring down a noble elk—Novel method of fishing.

One day I went with Samson on a moose hunt. We set out early in the morning, walking fast, and sometimes running for awhile. About ten o'clock, after hours of tramping through dense forest and wading through many swamps, we came upon the track of a big buck moose. Samson looked at the hoof-prints, and also at the ends of brush which had been bitten off by the huge fellow as he fed by the way. Finally he said, "Let us sit down for a little while, and let me think." I watched him as he lit his pipe and slowly puffed and thought out his plan of campaign. At last he rose and said, "That moose may be close to us. You stop right here, for should I miss him or only wound him, he is bound to run right past here. If so,

you will have a good shot; so you stay here and wait for me." I therefore sat down at the root of a stout tree and waited and listened.

Presently a fine large jumping deer came within two rods of me, and stood giving a long startled look around. I was strongly tempted to fire at the handsome creature, but refrained for fear of disturbing our larger game. Then the deer trotted on into the thicket, and I continued to wait. By and by Samson came back, and bidding me follow him, once more we took up the track. We strode along for perhaps an hour, when Samson remarked, "There, we will not follow the track any longer. He is resting, and I think he is in the centre of that clump of trees" (pointing to a dense body of timber not far from us). "See, his track passes straight on to the windward of that spot, and he will make a circle and come back close to his own track. I think he is there now. Let us go with the wind from here, and come around and meet his track."

This we accordingly did, and sure enough, as we came in on our circle, which was opposite to that of the moose, we presently met his track. The canny fellow was outwitted and we had but to follow him to his lair, which we proceeded to do with great caution. As we approached the clump of trees close to the westward fringe of which his outgoing track passed, we were moving

on tiptoe, I stepping very carefully in Samson's steps as he bent and wriggled around and through amongst the twigs and brush.

Soon we came to where he had first lain down. Here was his bed. Samson looked troubled for a moment, and whispered, "He may have fled." Then he looked and said, "No, he is only moving his bed," and with renewed caution we moved on slowly and carefully. Presently we heard him cough as if a leaf had stuck in his throat. The brush was very close, and now we could hear him breathe, and Samson signed for me to step ahead and shoot him. But I considered that we had been out nearly all day, and as we wanted the meat badly, I did not want to take any chances on myself. So I signed back, "You shoot him." Samson thereupon stepped ahead and fired, and I jumped beside him. We heard the crash of the huge animal making from us, and sprang forward in his track; but to our surprise there was no blood to be seen. On we ran until we came to where I had sat and waited so long and patiently. Samson saw that the moose had passed within three yards of this place, and as there was still no sign of blood on his track we were forced to the conclusion that there could not have been a ball in Samson's gun. This might occur but once in a lifetime, yet it was the only way of explaining the case in hand. He

could not miss him, the moose was so close and offered so large a target.

Very much disappointed, we turned our steps homeward. It was dark before we reached the tents. We had gone far, the day had been long, and we had not eaten anything since early morn. But optimistic old Paul said, "The best of hunters often come home like you have. We are not starving, there is plenty in camp, let us be thankful." We could not but be cheered by the old man's words, but even to this day, though thirty years have gone since then, I repent me that I had not taken that shot.

About this time my cow presented me with a fine calf, and from thence on we had milk as part of our provender. Of course the calf could not keep up when we moved camp, so an old widow woman, Maria, made a travois, and the calf was placed on it and thus was moved from camp to camp.

One day Samson and I set off on horseback to reconnoitre the country down east of where we had been hunting, in order to assure ourselves that the enemy was not in the vicinity. We rode all day, and towards evening, when about to make camp, Samson killed a jumping deer. Next morning we shot a cow elk, and I found her calf, so we concluded that with these we had about all our horses could pack home.

I had little Bob, or "Split Ear," as the Indians called him, and I put the two smaller skins and half of the meat of the three animals on him, all the time apologizing to the little fellow for doing so. Then we started for home, leading our loaded steeds. Everything went well until our moccasins gave out. The country we were in was rich in roses. Beautiful tiny prairie rose-bushes, crowded with crimson and pink and white blossoms with their delicate shadings and fragrant aroma, were all around us, and everywhere *under* us, as our bare and bleeding feet evidenced. Under such conditions we surely had "too much of a good thing." And yet we did not like to leave any of the meat. While we were thus proceeding painfully on our way we came upon a sleeping band of prairie wolves. They had evidently gorged themselves to the full and were now resting. I held both horses, and Samson tiptoed in amongst them as they snored, and fetching his riding-whip down full length across the side of a tremendous she-wolf, he brought out of her a howl of mingled surprise and pain, and then there was a stampede of wolves in every direction that was amusing to witness. But while we laughed heartily and trudged on, the rose-bushes seemed to multiply, and I bethought me of my saddle-blanket, and again apologizing

to my horse, I tore a strip from it, and we wound that around our bleeding and bruised feet. Twice I did this, until no more of the blanket could be spared from the horse's back; and when the second wrapping was worn out I again made profound apologies to my horse, and mounted on top of the meat and hides. The sturdy little fellow, nothing daunted, trotted me into camp, I promising to give him many days of absolute rest.

Another day I went out with one of our hunters called "Firing-at-a-mark Stony." We generally cut his name short, calling him "Firing Stony." He was a good hunter, but just then he was suffering with weak eyes and had not done much on this trip. We rode for miles, when presently I saw a buck elk in the distance, moving across our course. We headed him off, and I said to my companion, "Run to that bluff and shoot him." This he attempted to do, but missed the elk. Then said I, "You have had your chance; the next one is mine."

We kept on a few miles farther, when suddenly I saw a monster elk feeding along the shore of a small lake. I seized my companion's rein and pulled both horse and man out of sight as quickly as I could. We hastily fastened our horses and approached the spot where I had seen the elk. There was quite a promontory or

hill down to the spot where our game was feeding, and he seemed to be coming our way. So I crawled to the top of this hill, and Firing Stony came behind me. "If you miss him I will fire," he said. "Of course," said I, "you are Firing Stony; you cannot do anything else but fire. However, I am not going to miss him," and up to the top of the hill we crawled. When I peeped over the summit the big fellow was almost directly beneath me, and still calmly feeding; so I rose and shot him right through the back, and down he tumbled. Firing Stony then ran excitedly down and shot him in the head. "Why did you do that?" I enquired. "To make sure of him," he responded cheerfully, "we already missed one to-day." "You missed one, but I did not," said I, and we laughed as we reloaded our guns and straightened the immense creature preparatory to skinning him. We made a fire and roasted the antlers, and were hungry enough to heartily enjoy a substantial meal.

Once more our horses were heavily laden, especially mine, for besides half of the meat I had the hide; but this time it was not little Bob, so I did not much care.

I had with me my train of dogs, and as we were drying all the meat we could spare for future use, I was glad to hear that there were

"Down we ran, and chased them across the full length of the bar." (*Page 155.*)

fish in a creek which ran from Spotted Lake into Buffalo Lake. So one day I took a boy with me and a pack-horse, and whistling the dogs after us, we galloped on to the creek. This I found to be made up of a long bar on which the water was shallow, and deep holes, and sure enough in the deep holes the fish were found in great numbers. I saw these were suckers and jackfish; but while here were the fish in plenty, we had neither nets nor spear, nor even a hook. How were we to kill the fish? I sat down on the bank to study out some method for this purpose. The day was clear and fine, with small clouds scudding across the sky. Presently one of these clouds came between us and the sun. As the sky darkened, I saw to my delight that the fish came up out of the deep holes and started across the bar and down stream. They were in the process of migrating. I called to the boy to make ready, and he slipped off his leggings and I took off my trousers, and we got some sticks and watched the sky. Now another fleecy cloud was sailing athwart us and the sun, and up came the fish, and down we ran, and chased them across the full length of the bar, each of us killing quite a number as we ran. These we threw out to the dogs, who ate them eagerly, and in a few hours we had killed all our dogs could eat and all our horses could carry

home. Indeed, the boy's horse seriously objected to carrying any, for no sooner had we got the animal packed and the boy astride of the pack, than there was the biggest kind of a circus, and presently down came both boy and fish. But we made the "bucking" brute pack most of the fish home, and the boy rode the other horse as we rode back to camp.

CHAPTER XVII.

Our camp visited by a band of Mountain Stonies—My schooling in the university of frontier life—Back to our Mission again—Limited *cuisine*—Home-made agricultural implements—We visit Victoria—Off to Fort Carlton for Mission supplies—Inquisitive Chippewyans—My eldest sister married to Mr. Hardisty, of the Hudson's Bay Company—The honeymoon trip to Mountain House—Rival sportsmen—Charging a flock of wild geese at full gallop—Return to Pigeon Lake—Our work extending.

WHILE we were near Spotted Lake we fell in with some five or six lodges of Mountain Stonies, who were so overjoyed to see us that they moved over and camped beside us for a time. Among them were the two young fellows who came to our camp at the bend of Battle River during the autumn of 1863, as readers of "SADDLE, SLED AND SNOWSHOE" may remember.

This was our first meeting since that time, and we were naturally pleased. Here was my opportunity as a missionary, and I seized it with eagerness. In the tent, on the hunt, at our services, Sunday and Monday and all the week, we were watching our opportunities and preaching

the gospel of peace and good-will, of a present and eternal salvation. What a school to be placed in by the order of God's providence!

For the work I had to do I must acquire an actual knowledge of the country, I must gain the confidence of the people, I must learn their language and mode of life, I must become familiar with their history, their religion, and their idioms of thought; and here amongst these Crees and Stonies, living with them in their own way and in their own country, I was being educated for the work God had in hand for me to do.

A short time ago, in one of the favored cities of older Canada, a prominent lawyer asked me at the close of the service one Sunday morning, "What university did you graduate from, Mr. McDougall?" "The largest on earth," I answered; "all out of doors, amid the varied experiences of frontier life." "Certainly," said the lawyer, "it was a grand schooling, and you have profited by it." Thus God was training me. My teachers were Samson and Paul, Cree and Stony, Blackfoot and Blood, Piegan and Sarcee, and every Hudson's Bay Company officer and employee, every cultivated traveller and hardy pioneer and wild western empire foundation layer; and along with these the grand pages of the older Bible, as written upon the mountains and plains and forests and streams of this big

new country. I was learning every day some needed lesson.

Our Sundays were busy times. When the weather permitted we held three open-air meetings. When it rained we went from lodge to lodge. Mrs. McDougall sang well and rendered effective aid. The Indians generally take to singing, and as some of the translations we used were full of the very pith of the gospel message, their hearts were reached; the men cried out for salvation, and through Jesus found it.

For some two weeks the Stonies remained with us, we doing what we could for them in instruction in religious matters, as also awakening within them a desire for knowledge as to the world and things in general. When they left us to go back to the mountains we began to move northward, and I concluded to leave with Samson what horses of mine were still without loads, and move straight on to the lake, for the time was drawing near when other parties might visit the Mission.

Accordingly we started, travelling as fast as our cow could keep pace. While we had open country we kept the calf on an ordinary travois, but when we came to the woods near Pigeon Lake, we made a narrower one to suit the more limited space of the bridle-path. Mrs. McDougall and our baby, old Maria and her boy, and

myself constituted the party. Travelling as we did, we reached the Mission on the fifth day, and were glad to be at home once more. Our little one-roomed house seemed a palace beside the smoky lodge of our pilgrimage.

We found everything as we left it. Apparently we were the first to come in to the Mission, but in a day or two others from the west and north came straggling in, and our work was ready to hand. In a couple of weeks Samson arrived with more dried meat, having killed several elk and moose after we had left him. The reader will be astonished at the amount of meat we got through with, but one must remember that our diet in those days was for the most part of the time "meat straight" or "fish straight," with duck and rabbit for an occasional change. It was one thing or the other; there were no courses at our meals. Not only, however, were we without variety of food, but we were as badly off for a change of dishes. Indeed, our outfit for household purposes was small, and unique of its kind. But our neighbors were even more poorly provided than we. Often when invited to a feast by some successful friend, the shout would come from the door of his lodge, "John, come along and bring your dish with you." And I would take my dish or plate with me as I went.

"We carried the haycocks in between us on two poles." (*Page 171.*)

As we contemplated wintering at this point, I took Samson and went to work making hay. Our implements were of the crudest sort. We had scythes with improvised handles and wooden pitchforks, and when stacking we carried the haycocks in between us on two poles. Samson had never swung a scythe before, and he soon broke his, but fortunately I had a spare one. He was apt, however, and learned quickly. We worked hard and "made hay while the sun shone," and when it rained we went hunting. When we had several good-sized stacks made and strongly fenced, the time was come to journey down to the older Mission, as per arrangement with our Chairman when we left there last spring.

Our migratory people—for here people as well as preacher were itinerants—had scattered, some for the mountains, others into the northern forests, and quite a few to join the autumn hunt on the plains. And as my wife and I were owners of three wooden carts and three sets of rawhide cart harness, and a few cayuses, we concluded to let old Paul's wife have a cart and horse on shares for this "plain hunt." If the hunt was successful the outfit would bring us some provisions for the coming winter.

I engaged Samson to go with us to Victoria, and when we left the lake old Paul and Sam-

son's wife and children were the only residents of the Mission. Reaching Victoria, I found that father wanted me to take charge of the transports from Whitefish Lake and Victoria Missions and go with these to Fort Carlton, to bring from that point the supplies needed for these Missions; it having been arranged that the Hudson's Bay Company should bring these supplies to Carlton, but no farther.

The party from the sister Mission joined forces with ours some little distance below Saddle Lake, and we journeyed on as fast as was consistent with conserving the strength of our stock for the return journey. I was glad to find my old friend Peter Erasmus in charge of the carts from Whitefish Lake Mission, and in great harmony and good-fellowship we journeyed eastward. My friend Samson was a decided acquisition on such a trip. He was dead sure on stock, up early and late, and was ever an inspiration to the rest of our Indian drivers. We made long days, and in short time compassed the three hundred and more miles to Fort Carlton.

I camped my party on the north side of the river, at the foot of the high bank of the Saskatchewan, and crossing over I met the Chief Factor, who had just come across the plains from Fort Garry, and who told me that our supplies

had not yet reached Carlton. This was a disappointment, but I at once asked him to give us Hudson's Bay Company freight instead, and have them bring ours on later, to which he at once acceded. Within an hour of our arrival we were carting H. B. C. freight from their storehouse within the fort to the river bank, and crossing this in a small boat and loading it into our own carts on the north side.

It was while rushing this work that a small party of Chippewyans from the north were looking on as we worked, and speculating as to who I was. Was he a Hudson's Bay Company clerk, a free trader, or a traveller bent on sport? "Who is this fellow, anyway?" was the question which engaged their attention just then. Presently the "Solon" of the party, doubtless wishing to evidence the fact that the East had not a monopoly of wisdom, said, "I will tell you what he is," and stepping up to me he offered to shake hands, and in doing so, turned up the palm of my hand and saw the marks of blisters, for I had been working hard. Seeing the condition of my hand, he turned to his fellows and said, "He is only a common fellow." Like many another man who lives under more favorable conditions, his judgment of men was peculiar.

Early the next day we were on the road westward, and with incidents no more excit-

ing than breaking axles and splitting felloes and snapping dowel-pins and handling balky horses, and in my own case fighting a wretched toothache, we very soon rolled into the valley at Victoria, and were complimented by my father on having made an uncommonly quick trip.

We remained at Victoria until the Hudson's Bay Company brought along father's outfit. Helping in all matters around the Mission kept us busy with hands and head and heart. While we were at Victoria my eldest sister, Eliza, was married to Richard Hardisty, of the Hudson's Bay Company's service, who was then in charge of the Mountain House. Immediately after the marriage they and Nellie, one of my younger sisters, started on their long overland trip to the distant trading-post. Some of us accompanied them out for a few miles, enjoying some good shooting by the way, for the fowl were now starting south. Hardisty and Philip Tait, another Hudson's Bay Company officer, challenged my brother David and myself as to size and quality of our several hunts, and we kept about even up to almost the last minute, when David and I luckily saw a flock of geese light in a shallow swamp at some distance from us. There was no cover whatever to aid our approach, so I said to David, "Let us separate

and charge that swamp at full speed from two sides. Perhaps we will bamboozle those geese by so doing." This we proceeded to do, and urging our steeds to full speed, we came upon the birds so suddenly that they did not know what to do. When they rose on David's side he knocked two down; that sent them over to me, and I was equally successful, so that we were thus put four birds ahead of our competitors. This sport gave us a good time in giving our newly-married friends a "send-off" on their honeymoon trip. Away up at the foot of the Rockies, among the wild tribes of the mountains, my sisters were to make their home for a time; but we all had great faith in our new brother, so we wished them a hearty God-speed and returned to Victoria. When the goods came, father helped us all he could, and we soon were on the way back to Pigeon Lake. As I hoped to build a small church, I took with me an English half-breed, Francis Whitford by name, a handy fellow with an axe and saw, to aid in the building operations.

It was now late in September, and we had a house to build for my man, and a stable for a couple of oxen I had secured and for the calf, whose mother we found had committed suicide while we were away! The foolish old thing had started off in search of a mate, and despair-

ing of finding one, went into a miry lake some thirty-five miles from home and there died.

And now that our Mission was permanently established, the Indians came from long distances to sojourn for a little time with us, to attend our meetings and listen to our message. Stonies and Crees and mixed bloods, pagan and Roman Catholic and Protestant, all came to us and were eager to learn. We were busy all day long and on into the night, when by the light of the camp or chimney fire we preached and lectured and sang and prayed, till out of the old life and old faith men and women came into the light of the Gospel and into the life that is born of the kingdom of Christ.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Father visits our Mission—A dream that proved a portent—Drowning of Mr. Connor—"Straight fish" diet—We are visited by a war party of Crees—I am given a problem to solve—Francis and I set out to seek fresh provisions—Feasting on fat bear steaks—A lonely Christmas—Mr. Hardisty visits us—We in turn visit Mountain House—A hard winter in the Saskatchewan country—Rations on short allowance—A run to Victoria—David and I have a hard experience—Father and mother as "good Samaritans."

DURING the autumn father visited our Mission, and as a large camp of Stonies had gone westward, among whom there were children to be baptized and couples to be married, I prevailed upon him to follow them up. Accordingly we set out on their trail, and after two days of steady travel, during which we made a considerable detour, we came up to them at Buck Lake. We spent a day and night with them, father marrying several couples and baptizing some children. On our way back father had a strange dream, which he related to me the next morning as we rode along. It was to the effect that Mr. Connor, who had returned from Ontario and gone into Lac la Biche to trade for the winter,

was drowned. Father said he could not shake off the spirit of depression which the dream had created in his mind. Reaching Edmonton, he met the word that Mr. Connor was drowned, and, strangely enough, this had occurred at the time we were camping between Buck and Pigeon lakes. Readers of "SADDLE, SLED AND SNOW-SHOE" will remember Mr. Connor as the gentleman who travelled with my party across the plains in 1864.

Cutting and hauling timber, building a stable, whip-sawing lumber, making dog-sleds and horse-sleds, and fishing entailed an immense amount of work as winter came on. We made new nets and mended our old ones, built stagings and hung the fish until the real cold weather set in, when we froze them on the ice and then packed our catch. But while the fish were plentiful, they were of a very poor quality, both wormy and lean, so that out of hundreds a very small percentage was fit to eat. It was a case of over-production. Later, when some scores of thousands had been caught, there was a very perceptible improvement in quality; but that took years to accomplish.

It was at this time that a war party of Crees came to us. Fortunately there were quite a number of Stonies camped beside the Mission at this time. It was in the evening, as Francis and my-

self were working the whip-saw for all it was worth, in order to finish our number of planks for the day, that these fellows, some thirty in number, filed into our clearing. As the Stonies did not look upon them with favor, Fox, their leader, an old acquaintance of mine, brought the entire party of warriors into our house. Fortunately our one room was a big one, and in the interests of peace and the future of our work it was better to put up with a crowd for one night than to have turned them out, though the Stonies would have stood by us in such a case. We told them plainly, though, that we would have no nonsense this time; they might stay with us for the night, but I would issue ammunition to to the Stonies, and have them guard the place all the time that they were with us, and if they attempted to play any tricks their own lives would be the forfeit.

Fox protested against any evil intention on their part. He said they were tired and hungry, and were on their way back home, disappointed in their attempt to make a foray against the Blackfeet. Said he, "Let us stay with you one night, John, and we will leave quietly in the morning." We therefore sheltered and fed them and guarded them from the Stonies, who very naturally were resentful of the conduct of the Crees at different times in the past. However,

old Mark took charge of the watch, and assured me that it would be all right. I have no doubt that some of those men for the first time listened to the Gospel message sung and spoken in the language wherein they were born.

We entertained our guests as best we could, and spent the long evening by the light of our big chimney fire, opening to their minds visions of peace and predicting to them the near approach of the time when they should go to war no more. During the evening an old warrior, who had evidently been listening to what we had to say in an unbelieving mood, said, "You white men think you are very wise; now I will give you something to count which you will never be able to find out." "Well, let us have it," I said, when I saw that the crowd was interested in the matter. So the old fellow propounded his great puzzle. Said he, "There were seven buffalo bulls. Each had two horns and two eyes and one tail, and each foot had a split hoof, and above the hoof were two little horns. Now, for the seven bulls what was the whole number?" and the painted warrior gave a contemptuous grin, as if to say, "There, take that for your boasted wisdom to grapple with." I mentally worked out the simple question, and quickly gave him the number, and then Fox laughed and said, "Did I not tell you you could

not catch John? He is very much wiser than we are." But the old man, being much more obtuse and ignorant than Indians generally are, would not believe that I had answered his question, so he got a small pole and faced it on all sides with his knife. Then he took a piece of charcoal and began laboriously to make marks for the horns and eyes and tail, etc., of the bull. But his companions chafed him so unmercifully that he was soon lost in his calculations and gave up in chagrin.

This incident gave me a chance to enlarge on the benefit of schools and of education. I told that old mathematician that the little boys and girls in our schools would laugh at such a simple question as he gave; that the white men went on into millions upon millions in their calculations. Fox then said, "We are worse than children in all these matters, and we are foolish to gainsay the white man. But I believe John when he says that what has been possible to the white man is also possible to us Indians, for I notice that in some things our minds are quicker than those of most white men. But as for John, you cannot play with him; he is both white man and Indian put together." I warmly protested that I was but a child in wisdom; that I was learning about the Indians every day, and wanted to be their friend in truth.

Early next morning the party took their departure, and Mark and I saw them off some distance on their road, for it was hard to restrain some of the more turbulent and revengeful of the Stonies—they had too many old scores to wipe out.

Winter was now upon us, and our people scattered in quest of food and furs, so that by the first of December Francis and myself and our families were the only ones left at the Mission. At times the solitude was oppressive, and would have been much worse but that we were constantly busy hunting and fishing, taking out timber, gathering in firewood, etc. Breaking in dogs also took some time, for the old stock was about used up. Old Draffan and his contemporaries were gone, either dead or now too old for hard service.

About the middle of December Francis and I started out towards the plains with dog-trains. My object was two-fold—to visit the people, if I could find any, and also to try and obtain some provisions. We were growing tired of fish. We had about a foot of snow to break on the trail, and were glad towards the close of the third day to find the track of a solitary hunter, which we followed into his camp. Here we found Samson and old Paul and other of our own people, all very glad to see us, but, like ourselves,

on "short commons." The buffalo were far out, and these people were barely existing on an occasional deer and a few porcupines. But, fortunately for us, someone had run across a deer and killed him just before we arrived in camp, and we feasted with the rest on good fat meat. It was a rare treat to taste some fatty substance once more.

We held a meeting that night and another the next morning, and then went on, taking Samson with us, hoping to find some food. But after three days' steady travel all we got was a starving bull, which made both dogs and men sick, so we concluded to separate, Samson to strike straight for camp, and we for home. Snow had deepened, our dogs, like ourselves, were hungry and tired, and the miles seemed longer than usual, so that it was midnight on the fourth day on the home stretch before we reached the lake, glad enough to settle down again even to fish diet.

Christmas of 1864 came, but no Santa Claus for any of our party. However, my frugal wife managed to contrive a plum-pudding, and our little company enjoyed immensely such a delightful break in the monotony of our daily fare.

During the holidays I started alone for Edmonton, and there found my brother-in-law Hardisty from the Mountain House. He

accompanied me to Victoria, where we spent New Year's day with father and mother and the rest of our family. We found that at Edmonton and Victoria there was the same scarcity of food as with us. The buffalo were as yet far out, and the Indians were between us and them, and in a semi-starving condition. Moreover, the winter was a hard one, the snow deep and the cold intense.

Hardisty accompanied me back to Pigeon Lake on condition that I would go on with him to the Mountain Fort. "For," said he, "you should visit your sisters; our fort is part of your parish. You can preach to us—we need it—and you may meet some Indians in on a trade. Besides we can spare you a little provision." I here confess that while all the other reasons were true, the last one at that time was convincing and unanswerable.

I took Francis along, and we fought our way through deep snow and extreme cold to the Mountain House, a distance from Pigeon Lake of one hundred and twenty miles, reaching there after dark the third day. For both Francis and myself, after the meagre piscatorial diet of some months, it was hard work. Heavy exertion such as this requires strong food. But while at the fort, where we spent part of three days, we fared sumptuously on

good dried meat, which had been brought in from the plains by the Blackfeet. We had a delightful visit with my sisters and the people of the fort. Some Stonies came in to trade while we were there, and among these was my old friend Jonas, whom I was well pleased to see again. We held several services, and would gladly have stayed longer were it not that our families were in a state of semi-starvation at the distant lake.

We had presented to us 125 pounds of dried meat, and with this carefully tied on our sleds we said good-bye and turned our faces homeward. Though the road was heavy, by travelling most of the night we were back at the Mission early the third day, where we found all well and exceedingly glad to see us.

Not a single Indian put in an appearance. These were having all they could do to keep soul and body together. It was a hard winter all over the Saskatchewan country. We got up a lot of firewood and cut it into proper lengths, spending several days at this work. Meantime, we tried to fatten our dogs on fish, but even they would not thrive on these. Then we started for Victoria, hoping that by this time a change for the better in the provision line would have taken place.

At Edmonton we found the people of the fort

on limited rations. Pushing on we made a big day without any trail, from above Sturgeon River to Victoria, over sixty miles, and when comfortably seated in the Mission mother said, "I am sorry, John, but all I can give you for supper to-night is potatoes and milk." Both Francis and I vehemently asserted that this would be a glorious change for us, and so it was.

Here also the whole settlement was on short allowance. Father had heard of Maskepetoon's camp being about 150 miles down country, but the reports were not encouraging. "Still," said he, "those Indians ought to be visited, and I am glad you have come, for now you can go to them." To do this we must have food, and as my brother David had made a fishery out at Long Lake that fall and his fish were still out there, we first went out to the lake, about sixty miles north, for the fish. On this trip David and father's Cree boy Job went with me. The round trip was only one hundred and twenty miles, but it still lingers in my memory as one of the hardest on record in my experience. The cold was so intense it worried our dogs to stand it, and the snow was so full of friction that our sleds seemed almost as though they were being pulled through sand. The camps were smoky, and on the whole it was a hard and disagreeable journey.

In the Mission house at this time there lay upon his dying bed a poor young fellow who had wasted his substance in riotous living and was now paying the penalty in extreme physical prostration. He had gone out on the plains the same summer that I did, and wintered in the Saskatchewan the season of 1862-63. During that winter, while he and a companion were out hunting near Battle River, their camp was attacked one night by Indians. His companion was shot and killed, he himself wounded, and in making his escape, and in the subsequent journey to Edmonton, he underwent great hardship. It was after this, when he had thoroughly recovered, that I first met him. He was then a very strong man, one of the best swimmers I ever saw in the water. But he went across the mountains into the mining camps, and when he came back to our side his strength was about gone.

Father found him in a room in the fort at Edmonton in sore straits, and arranged for his transport to Victoria. Both father and mother and all the rest were now doing everything they could to make him comfortable, but he was dying. He said to me as I bade him farewell for our trip to Maskepetoon's camp, "Good-bye, John, until we meet up yonder." "Why, Harry," I said, "I expect to come back soon." "Ah,"

he said, "but I will be dead before you come." And so it proved. Poor Harry was now all right. He had come to himself, and was born again. But it was a heaven-send to that young fellow in this wild country to fall at last into mother's hands. She in a multitude of ways soothed and comforted the last weeks of his life.

CHAPTER XIX.

We start out to hunt for buffalo—Fish and frozen turnips—A depleted larder—David's bag of barley meal—At the point of starvation—We strike Maskepetoon's camp—An Indian burial—Old Joseph dying—We leave the camp—Generous hospitality—A fortunate meeting—Frostbites—A bitterly cold night—Unexpected visitors—Striking instance of devotion—I suffer from snowshoe cramp—Arrival at Victoria—Old Joseph's burial—Back to Pigeon Lake.

We started on our plain trip with commissariat promising nothing more delicate or appetizing than fish and frozen turnips! Our party consisted of my brother David, Francis, Job and myself. We took our course southeast, by Sickness Hill and Birch Lake, and failing to find any fresh tracks of Indians in that direction, we then made more easterly. While going down the north bank of the Battle River our fish ran out. This was serious, but we had the turnips left. Soon, however, we roasted the last of these, and pushed on our course amid deep snow and cold and stormy weather. An old bull was shot, but we could eat nothing of him except the heart and tripe and the tongue,

Even our dogs declined the meat. Things were commencing to look blue. That night David produced a small bag of barley meal which my sister had ground in the coffee mill. Our camp was jubilant over this, and we heartily enjoyed the small tin of porridge provided for supper that night. Next day we travelled as rapidly as we could, but were not in condition for quick time. The barley was going fast, and we began anxiously to watch the doling out of the slender supply. In the stress of hunger we were becoming meaner and smaller. I caught myself looking to see that my brother did the square thing in serving out the little pot of meal gruel, for it was becoming thinner every time. I bit my lips and felt mortified at myself for being so contemptible. I began to realize what I had read of men's doings when in sore straits such as seemed to be coming on us. But we kept on, and the day after the meal was gone we struck the trail of a large camp, evidently some days ahead of us.

The sight of the trail put new life into our whole party. We covered several of their day's journeys before we camped that night, and though hungry and weak were out early the next day. About ten o'clock we saw a column of smoke rising in the air, and as we drew nearer saw horses and people moving. Camp was being

struck, and nearly all had gone from the spot as we came up. A little to one side, at the edge of a bluff of timber, a small group of men were engaged in burying one of their number. We were just in time to help in the last rites.

Old Maskepetoon was there. "You come like a ray of sunshine to comfort us, John," whispered the old Chief, as he warmly gripped my hand. The work of interment went on in silence. I knew the deceased—son-in-law to old "Great One," one of my particular friends—a great strong man cut off suddenly in his prime.

Sadly I watched the removing of the soil. The snow having been cleared away, the dried leaves and twigs were carefully placed in a hide and put aside. The earth, too, as it was loosened up, was placed in hides. Then the body was laid in the shallow grave, and the earth put back in and trampled down until level with the original surface, after which the leaves and twigs were scattered over the place, making it look as if it had not been disturbed. The unused earth was carried away and scattered so as not to appear. All this was done that the enemy might not discover the grave and desecrate the person of the dead.

Needless to say the food placed before us by our kind friends was eagerly devoured, but we were discouraged to find that these people were

living from hand to mouth—that while the buffalo were within from sixty to one hundred and fifty miles distant, they had not yet attempted to come north. The camp was still waiting and hoping for this, and in the meantime was existing on the game secured by hunting expeditions which were ever and anon sent out between the severe spells of weather. That the camp was sorely in need of food was very apparent to me as I passed on through the moving crowds to the spot designated for the fresh camping ground. Already a large number of tents were placed by those who moved earlier in the day. Reaching these we went at once into Muddy Bull's lodge, and were gladly received by my old friends Noah and Barbara. Here I was sorry to hear that old Joseph was in another lodge close to us, and in a dying condition. I went in to see our "old standby," and found him very weak, and yet glad to press my hand. "Ah, John," said he, "I am still a poor weak sinner, for I have longed to be released from this frail body. I have even asked the Lord to take me home. I feel I have done wrong. I should bide the Lord's own time." "My dear Joseph," I answered, "I am sure the good God well understands your case, and His big heart thoroughly sympathizes with you. He will not misjudge you. Do not worry about

these matters. You have been a faithful servant, and your reward is near." "I am glad to hear you say so, John; it comforts me to see you once more. Give my warmest greetings to your father and mother and all our people at the Mission." Thus spoke my old friend and travelling companion. Many a long weary mile we had struggled over together, many a cold camp we had shared. A brave, true, hardy, consistent Christian man he was, and now here he lay dying of hunger and cold and disease. I would have delighted in helping him, but except a hymn and prayer, and a few visits during the two or three days we spent in the camp, I could not do much for him. It seemed hard to let him die in such straits, but we had neither medicine nor the food he needed. After several services, a council or two in Maskepetoon's tent, and visiting in many of the lodges, we started across country for our homeward trip. During our stay in camp the Indians had shared with us handsomely. The best they had was given to us, and both dogs and men felt revived and strengthened. Nor was this all, for when leaving the good-hearted people made a collection of provisions, and we had with us about quarter-loads when we left camp.

Maskepetoon thoroughly enjoyed our visit, and it was at his suggestion that the collection

of food was taken up. He said, "Tell your father that we are still hopeful of the buffalo taking a turn northward, and of making robes and provisions and coming into the Mission in the spring well loaded. Tell him to pray for us. We send him and those at the Mission our heartfelt greetings."

We had not made more than eight or ten miles on our way when we had the good fortune to come across Maskepetoon's son just as he had killed two bulls. These were in fairly good flesh, and the generous fellow told us to help ourselves. We each took about a hundred pounds of fresh meat from his kill, and thanking him went on our way. That afternoon we had a wide plain to cross with snow deep and the cold searching. Frozen noses and chins and cheeks were common, and we were constantly telling one another to rub and helping to rub until the clear white gave place to the natural color.

By dark we reached the first point of woods, and were disappointed to find that there was no dry timber of any size to be found: but as there was no road we concluded to camp and do the best we could. And now the cold was bitterly cutting. Work as hard as we might we still were constantly freezing. The few little dry willows we found were barely sufficient to start our fire, but the frost was so keen that the green

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trees blazed up as if dry, and in turns we cut them down and carried in and stood around that blaze. There was no thought of trying to sleep; we were afraid to risk it.

We boiled some of the bull's meat, and I very well remember, as I stood before that big brush fire, with a robe over my shoulders to break the wind, that my piece of meat, but now out of the boiling soup, though not very big, was frozen before I had eaten more than half of it. I was astonished at this, but found that my companions were having similar experiences. No sleep, no rest; steadily all night long we fought the storm and cold. To make matters more dismal, if possible, about an hour after midnight we heard parties approaching our camp, and when these came up, found that they were bringing poor Joseph's frozen body to take it to the Mission for burial.

It was all of one hundred and fifty miles to the Mission. There was no road, the snow was unusually deep and the weather intensely cold; yet here were two Indians with a dog-sled upon which was stretched the inanimate body of their friend, and they were willing in the face of great difficulty to undertake this long journey, just because their friend had signified a wish to be interred beside the Mission. Who will say after this that these people have no sentiment?

Now there were six of us to keep the fire burning, and in relays of two we chopped and carried until daylight came, when in gladness we resumed our journey. At any rate we would have plenty of dry wood for the rest of the trip. What food we carried was not of the best. Having no fat in it, it had not the quality essential to keeping out the cold. It takes the heart out of most men to struggle on day after day under such conditions, and in my case there was a complication of troubles, for during the second day out of Maskepetoon's camp I was taken with my first and only attack of "snow-shoe sickness." This is a contraction of the tendons and sinews of the instep, and is exceedingly painful, worse, indeed, than toothache or even earache. It kept me from resting at night, and when we went out of our noon or night camps I would hop along on one foot with the help of a pole, until in sheer weariness I would force my foot to the ground. Our dogs were so thin and weak that they could not draw me on the sled.

Five days of cold and pain and extreme hardship brought us to the Mission. While our friends were glad to see us, they were sorely disappointed that our food report was not more encouraging. There was nothing for the settlement but to be content with potatoes and parched barley for some time to come. During

our absence young Hamilton had died, and we buried old Joseph beside him. For some years of this life he could say with him of old, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." And in full hope we laid his mortal remains in the ground, once more to recline on the breast of mother-earth.

Two days at Victoria, and Francis and I and my brother David again set out for Pigeon Lake. There had been no travel, and the snow had deepened so that every step of the road had to be broken. But in spite of this we made the lake in four days, and found our families still alone but well. For thirty-three days their isolation had been complete, and during the latter half of the period their anxiety great. What signified that we had brought little or no provisions? We had reached home, and with four days' rations ahead. From the purely material standpoint our trip had been a miserable failure. We had spent our strength for naught, had undergone untold hardships, and the financial results were *nil.* But is it not written that "man doth not live by bread only"? We had brought consolation to the sorrowing and dying; we had conveyed to Maskepetoon and his large camp, during a desponding time in their experience, the kind brotherly greetings of the big Church we represented, and the love and profound sympathy of the larger Christianity we professed. We had

preached the Gospel of hope and joy to multitudes; we had made men and women forget, for a time at least, their present hunger and cold and pain and suffering, as we told them of that better land where these conditions did not exist. We had been privileged during that trip to sound the glad tidings in ears hitherto strange to such sublime teaching. And if these were some of the present and tangible results of our journey, who will estimate the fruitage of eternity? Verily to men of humble faith such work as ours is a continual paradox. We are hungry, yet always feasting; we are tired and weary, yet constantly gaining strength; we are sad, yet full of joy; we are at times despondent, still ever rejoicing. Verily this Gospel of our Christ is a perennial benediction.

CHAPTER XX.

My brother a "ready-made pioneer"—Hunting rabbits—Two roasted rabbits per man for supper—I find my friend, Firing Stony, in a flourishing condition—Poisoning wolves—A good morning's sport—I secure a wolf, two foxes and a mink—Firing Stony poisons his best dog—I enjoy a meal of bear's ribs—I meet with a severe accident—Samson treats me to a memorable feast.

THIS was my brother's first trip to Pigeon Lake. He had never been seen so far west in his life before. To him, as to myself, this big country was a constant revelation. After staying with us a few days, he returned alone to Victoria. Had he not been by nature and instinct a "ready-made pioneer," I should have hesitated to let him thus return alone, but in his case I felt no fear.

And now my man and I settled down to taking out timber and whip-sawing lumber. Nor was this our only occupation, for we had nets to mend and clean and fish to catch; and to chop and chisel through the ice and set a net in the dead of a northern winter was not an easy or comfortable task. Rabbits, fortunately, were

numerous about us at this time, and gave pleasing variety to our table fare. Taking our dogs and sleds, we would go out a few miles to where the nature of the country was favorable for these "jumping bits of food" for men and wildcats. Choosing a suitable spot for our camp we would fasten our dogs, and each go his own way and kill as many rabbits as he could before dark. Then returning laden to camp, we would gather a good supply of wood for our fire and settle ourselves for the night. As the fire grew strong we would stick each of us a rabbit on an improvised spit, and when these were roasted have supper. Then we cleaned our guns and fed our dogs, and by and by roasted another rabbit apiece and made our second supper. Even then we were not too well satisfied! Two rabbits of an evening per man may seem rather much to him who all his life has had his fresh meat, butter and bacon and beans and bread, and many other foods at each meal. But I will here place it on record that two rabbits straight in one evening, in the face of violent exercise and the all out-doors dining and living room we were in, did but barely satisfy the pangs of hunger for a short time.

About the last of February something impelled me to make a trip out south-eastward of the lake. Taking Francis with me, we packed

our sled with fish enough to provide for our dogs and ourselves for four or five days, and started. We took turns in going ahead on snowshoes, and as our dogs were fresh we made good time. Early the second day we came to a solitary lodge of Indians, and entering it found it was the home of Mr. Firing Stony, of whom I already have spoken in this book. He and his family were in a starving state, and they told us of others farther on similarly situated, whom they had seen some ten days before. We gave them some of our fish and told them to make all haste towards the lake, and then we pushed on. But, after two days' search, failing to find any more lodges, we turned back and again came to Firing Stony's camp. They had moved a short distance nearer the lake, but being exceedingly weak, could move only slowly. Firing Stony had tracked deer and hunted them for two days, but had failed to kill any, and now his large family was entirely without food. We had only two small fish left. These I gave to the mother to prepare, and we made our meal of them that night. Early next morning, taking Firing Stony with us, we set off for the lake, bidding the family follow us as fast as they could. I confess that I was never very much good at anything like vigorous exercise taken on an empty stomach, and while these thirty

miles were long and difficult to Francis and myself, they must have been a very heavy strain upon our half-famished companion. He was plucky, though, and kept up well. Early in the afternoon we reached the Mission, and very soon my wife was preparing a good meal of such food as we had.

We were hungry, but our guest was famishing and had to be carefully fed, especially after such a run through the deep snow. Towards evening he said he was all right, and would return to meet his family. So we loaded him with fish and told him to rest by the way, and we would come on the morrow and help him and his family into the Mission. To witness this man's intense interest in those dependent upon him, to see that he was willing to sacrifice himself, if necessary, on their behalf, was very stimulating to our optimism for the future of this people. In this man, notwithstanding the centuries of vice and ignorance, the germ of divinity was quite apparent.

The next evening we had the entire family in camp beside us, and our women were doing what they could to relieve their necessities. In a few days the little ones and their elders began to look like different people. What was mere existence to us was to them a feast.

During the early part of the season the

wolves had killed several of the horses and colts of the Indians, so on one of my trips I secured a small vial of strychnine, and used it with deadly effect. By the middle of March I had poisoned twenty-eight wolves and several foxes, and with these was able to buy a few articles of clothing and two small sacks of barley meal. My plan was to put a little poison into a small cube of wildcat fat, which is very soft and melts with little heat. Then I would chop up some fish and scatter them around where I had placed the baits. I handled the poison very carefully, as I did not want to kill any dogs with it, and moreover, the natives had a prejudice against using it. Late in the evening I would drive with my dogs several miles to the end of the lake, and there place the baits, and next morning, before daylight, I would be making across the ice as fast as my dogs could carry me, gathering up the results in wolves or foxes, or untouched baits, with which I came home. In this way I ran but little risk of poisoning any other than the animals I was after.

One day I had quite a run of good luck. The evening before I had noticed the tracks of a fox near home, and as I did not want to place poison so near the house, I set a small one-springed trap at the place. In the morning, on my way to where the baits were placed, I noticed that the

little trap, to which I had fastened a short stick, had been dragged out on the lake. Farther on I again crossed the trail of the dragged trap, now striking for the shore. Continuing my course, I came to the baits, and found a big grey wolf and a red fox stiff and stark. Lashing these on my sled, I gathered up the unused bait, and returning drove to the spot where my trap had been pulled into the woods. Here I tied the dogs, put on my snowshoes, and started on the trail. I had not gone far when I found the stick which had been attached to the trap, and said to myself, "Now then for a long chase, for that trap is small and the chain attached is also small and short." But presently I came to where the heavy snow had bent a thick bush over, making a sort of den, into which my trap had been dragged. Picking up a stick I shoved it into the den. Immediately I heard the jingle of the chain of the trap, and before I could withdraw the stick a large fox jumped past me and made for the forest as fast as he could go.

I saw that he was a fine fellow, beautifully marked. I saw also that he had the trap on one of his front feet, and, determined not to lose my quarry, I pushed after him as fast as I could. For the first hour or two, aided by the thick brush and the rabbit-paths, he kept ahead of me, but towards noon I chased him out into a more

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"And now I . . . tapped his nose for him so effectually that he was stunned." (*Page 205.*)

open country, where the snow was deep and loose, and here I saw plainly I was gaining ground. Presently I saw the snow flying ahead of me, and rushing in caught the fellow digging out an old burrow which was covered with snow, and had not been used that winter at least, but which must have been an old lair of his, as he had made straight for it. My first grip was at his tail, and the white tip of this came off in my hand. The next catch I had him by one of his hind legs, and then I paused and thought what I should do. If I pulled him out, he would doubtless bite me. I felt about in the snow and was fortunate in securing a small stick. And now I pulled Mr. Fox out, and tapped his nose for him so effectually that he was stunned, and then I killed him.

Throwing the fox over my shoulder, I struck out straight for home. The sharp chase in the keen air had given me a rousing appetite, but before getting my dinner I thought I would bring in some fish to thaw, in order to have them ready to feed my dogs when I brought them home. As I entered the fish-house I heard something stir, and giving the pile of frozen fish a shake, saw a mink rush out of the pile and make for a small hole in the roof. Hurriedly grasping a fish-stick, I ran to meet him, and as he jumped from the roof I caught him and

killed him. Thus I had as the result of one morning's sport a big wolf, a red fox, a cross fox, and a mink, which as things went in those days was a straight run of good luck.

One evening Mr. Firing Stony came to me and said, "I wish you would give me a bait or two and let me try my luck with them. My snares and traps are of no use." I answered, "You are too careless; you would poison somebody." But he pressed for them, so I gave him three baits and he went away happy. But as soon as he saw the sparks flying out of my chimney the next morning, which was long before daylight, he came in laughing and said, "You knew better than I, for, just as you told me, I have poisoned my best dog. There she was, lying stiff dead when I made the fire just now." "Well," I said, "I did not want to give you those baits." "I know," he answered, "and I was careful, but that dog was a notorious thief."

Not long after this Firing Stony invited me to his tent, and as I approached the spot I became aware through my olfactory nerves that he had made a successful hunt at last, for certainly something that smelled good was boiling in that kettle. Before I really knew what it was, a thrill of joy went through my whole being. Right here I want the reader to know

that I am not more epicurean than most humanity; but when you are always hungry for change of fare, or for food itself, you become very susceptible to the smell of good food cooking. "You are welcome," said mine host, and I answered, "What strange thing have you been about?" His wife answered, "He has gone and found a bear." Sure enough, presently there were dished up to me some delicious bear ribs. I ate what I could and took the rest home with me, as this was an Indian custom and exceedingly convenient at times. I will never in this life while memory lasts forget how delicious that fat bear-meat was.

It came out that my friend was tracking a moose, and in doing so came upon a bear's den and succeeded in killing the old one and two cubs. Next morning, taking my dogs, we went and brought in the rest of the meat, I getting half of it as my share, and the following day started early to intercept and follow up if possible the trail of the moose. But after hours of heavy snowshoeing and wading and crawling, we found that some wolves had run the moose away from us. Tired and disappointed, we reached home late that night.

About the end of March Indians began to straggle in, bringing little or no provisions, but glad to fall back with us on the food supply of

the lake. It was about this time, when Francis and I were rushing the whip-sawing, that one day the boxing came off in my hands and the back of the saw split my nose and lips, cut my chin, and pretty nearly knocked my front teeth down my throat. Fortunately we had a supply of sticking plaster, and while I held the parts together in turn my wife deftly fastened them with the plaster. I was unable either to speak or to masticate my food for several days, and was forced to subsist on sucker broth. But I could continue my work at the sawing, and my wounds closed and healed in an extraordinarily short time, demonstrating the fact that after all what we called hard fare was really health producing.

I was but nicely over my painful wounds when Samson came in. His tent was hardly in place when I was invited over to have a meal with him. I had felt hungry all that winter, but the last few days of fish broth had intensified that feeling. Now here was what seemed to me a feast for a king—the tongue and boss of a fat buffalo, some pounded meat and marrow-fat, and the ham of a porcupine. Many a sumptuous repast have I since enjoyed in palatial homes, many a dining-car meal have I partaken of since that meal in my friend Samson's lodge, but of none of these have I such pleasant recol-

lections as of this in the skin lodge, spread on newly cut spruce brush and served in homely style. Nevertheless, as Samson related his winter's experiences, and I listened and ate, this latter was done sparingly, for there were others to be thought of, and to these also such a spread would come as a heaven-send.

CHAPTER XXI.

Alternate feasting and fasting—We start out on a buffalo hunt—Old Paul brings down a fine moose—Providential provision—Enoch Crawler kills another moose—Magnificent landscapes—Entering the great treeless plains—Wonderful mirages—We come upon the tracks of buffalo—Our men shoot a huge grizzly—Charging a bunch of cows—A lively chase—Samson's plucky plunge over a bank after the buffalo—I chase and kill a fine cow—The camp busy killing and making provisions—Guarding against hostile Indians.

ALL through April and May we had quite a multitude around the Mission, feasting or fasting with us, as circumstances dictated. Sometimes the moving ice on the lake kept us for days at a time from visiting our nets, and then there was hunger in the camp. But again the ice moved out, and we were provided with food sufficient in quantity if not all we would like in quality. About the end of May, after putting our garden in shape, with a few families we started for the big plains and the summer ranges of the buffalo.

During the past winter the buffalo kept far out and great destitution consequently ensued. Spring came and found the forts and Mission

stations without the usual stock of pemmican and dried meat. There was no use of our looking for help from these sources; we must act for ourselves. I had talked the plain trip up among our people, but only a few would attempt it with us. Nevertheless, these few were picked men. There was old Paul and Samson, and Mark and his father and brother, and a Mountain Stony, Enoch Crawler by name, and Francis and myself. We counted ten men in all and two boys, besides the women and children. The most of our party struck straight for the first edge of the thick woods, while Francis and others went around to bring our carts from where we had left them the previous autumn,

We left the lake on Monday morning. Wednesday evening we were camped together a united party. Saturday afternoon we went into camp early, in order to give everyone a chance to do some hunting for Sunday. Our tents were pitched in a beautiful plain, by the shore of a stream called Pipe Stone. Thus far no large game had been killed. Rabbits and ducks and the few dried fish we had started with formed our food. Saturday evening I shot a brace of rabbits, and carrying them back to camp was surprised to find that nearly all the women had disappeared. Enquiring the reason, I was told that old Paul had killed a moose. Now,

old Paul was our invalid. He could only by crawling or with crutches move in any way, and I was surprised that he of all our party should kill the moose. But presently my wife and the other women rode into camp bringing with them the most of old Paul's kill. The old man had crawled to the edge of a small lake to try and shoot some ducks, and while slowly approaching this had detected the splash of a large animal coming into the lake from the other side. He saw it was a moose, and taking in the lay of the country, he concluded that it would come out about where he was. Hastily seizing his gun-worm and fixing this to the ramrod he pulled out the charge of shot and put a ball in its place. Sure enough the old hunter's instinct had told him right, for presently the huge animal came out of the lake and through the fringing of the timber right up to where he lay. Old Paul's shot was straight and true, and our camp rejoiced in the prospect of moose steaks as a change of diet. As this came on the eve of the Sabbath, it was very significant to our simple faith as an evidence of the favor of Providence and an endorsation of our Sabbath observance.

Early Monday morning the tents were folded and we were on our way south-eastward. Wednesday we were given another moose, this time Enoch Crawler being the fortunate hunter.

Quite a number of beaver were caught and shot during the week's travel, and on Saturday, as we camped at the last point of woods, we killed our first buffalo. Here we organized our number into two watches, five men and one boy in each, to keep guard alternate nights. We spent a part of Monday in cutting and peeling poles and laying in a stock of dry wood; for while our fuel for some time would consist almost wholly of buffalo chips, yet it was essential to carry wood to guard against storms. We were now entering the treeless plains of the great North-West.

During the week we got several straggling bulls, and another Sunday came without any recent signs of either men or buffalo in numbers. We were now three weeks from home. For the first two our course lay through woodland and prairie, an undulating country, rich in succulent verdure, beautifully watered and with magnificent scenic properties. If our living was often without change, nevertheless we always had a sumptuous variety, to serve as both tonic and dessert, in the exceeding beauty of the landscape through which we were passing. Speaking for myself, these scenes were a constant stimulus and blessing to me. My fare might have been hard, the crossing of a creek or the climbing of a hill difficult, a balky horse exceedingly trying,

a childish and often unreasonable parishioner very perplexing, but as I stood on some noble vantage ground and "viewed the landscape o'er," I remembered these little worries no more for the time, but with intense pleasure drank in the scene before me. There lay spread a splendid panorama of slope and vale and natural lawn, of terraced banks and lofty hills, beaver meadows and grand prairies, mirrored lakes and gently flowing streams. The forces of Jehovah had been at work. His turning lathes had shaped and rounded. His storms and deluges had washed and laved for centuries. His gardening winds and currents had carried and planted germs and seeds. His rains and dews and light and heat had caused these to grow. His resurrection agencies had covered and swarded and forested and blossomed, and clothed the rich and lovely vales and hills. For man all nature and nature's God had thought and planned and carried into execution. In gratitude and thanksgiving I beheld and worshipped, and with a feeling of growing dignity moved on to another vantage ground.

For the last week we had been out on the real plains. Nothing bigger there than herb plant or tiny rose-bush—grass, grass, everlasting grass, everywhere. Like ocean waves the plain dipped and rose. What gorgeous sunsets

we witnessed; what surpassingly beautiful sunrises we beheld as we steadily pushed out on this great upland ocean of grass and plain. And those wonderful mirages, who can describe them? Here was photography on a magnificent scale. Here was direct substantiation of the old assertion, "There is no new thing under the sun." The focusing of light, the developing processes of the chemical properties of the atmosphere, verily we may believe these have been at work, if not before, at any rate ever since the "morning stars sang together."

I had never until now launched out on the treeless plains. Though in the prairie country for five years of constant travel, yet this is my first trip into this bigness and wideness and strangeness of land and grass and mirage. By the agencies of the latter I have seen the facsimile of an immense district of country lifted into the heavens, and there upon atmospheric canvas were clearly reproduced hill and dale and stream, and herds of buffalo and camps of Indians. I believe I have seen in this way photographs of scenes that were from ten miles to six hundred distant from me. I have noticed that where this occurs there is a distinct condition of atmosphere and climate. It would seem as if a mysterious change were going on, and one could feel this in himself.

One day, after a thunder-storm had passed, my wife and I were driving on the high land near the Red Deer River. The sun had come out clear and bright, and presently the whole country was under the spell of a mirage. We were one hundred and fifty miles from the mountains, but these were brought near to us—so close they seemed that, as our horses trotted along the highway, we felt as if we were driving right into them. Watching the wonderful panorama, I saw away beyond the mountains, and there was a body of water, with land and hills in the far background. Then on the water there came in view a steamship. There she stood on her course with a dark cloud of smoke falling astern. I said to my wife, "What do you see?" "Why," she exclaimed, "I see a big lake, and there is a steamer coming towards us." All this was real to our vision and sense. And if truly a picture of this world, that mirage was revealing to our vision scenes seven hundred miles distant. It had lifted those mountains thousands of feet into the heavens and drawn them within the scope of our natural sight. Verily this is a strange, mysterious world, even this wherein we now dwell.

The Monday morning following our third Sunday out brought us sunshine and rain, one of those quick downpours you cannot make ready for as you travel. The cloud and mist

from this had barely cleared away when I saw a dark object in a lake ahead of us. I pointed this out to an Indian who was with me. "Oh!" said he, "that is a big stone in the lake." I declared it looked like some large animal, but as we were still distant from the lake we went on, and suddenly came upon the tracks of a large herd of buffalo. These were travelling right out eastward, and must have numbered two hundred or more. As the tracks were quite fresh, I concluded to ride ahead and reconnoitre, for eight or nine miles from us was a range of hills, and the herd was making straight for these. When about five miles from our party I heard quick shooting in their vicinity, and concluding they were being attacked by hostile Indians, I immediately turned my horse and rode as fast as I could towards them. But meeting an Indian, he stayed my alarm by saying, "It was a bear they were shooting." The object I had seen in the lake was an enormous grizzly, and he had shown fight, which accounted for the fusilade I had heard. The Indians told me that they had killed him, and that his meat was quite fat. If I had not been so much taken up with the fresh buffalo tracks I would have had the first shot at that grizzly, an eccentric fellow evidently, or he would not thus have wandered so far from his native mountains.

Our herd of buffalo were travelling fast, so fast indeed that we did not see either them or any of their relations that day, but were forced to content ourselves with roasted grizzly. The next day we came to a small bunch of cows that led us a lively chase. The land was broken and rolling, and the buffalo split up as we charged. Samson and I went after one portion at a break-neck speed down a range of hills into a valley, where I thought we were going to have a fair race, when suddenly the whole lot disappeared over a precipitous bank into a creek with a plunge and splash. I watched my companion to see what he would do, when I saw him urge his horse over the bank into about four feet of water. As he took the jump he held his gun up over his head to keep it dry, and I followed, doing the same. And now as the flying herd were rushing up the slope, Samson shouted, "That is a good one on your side; try and kill her." When I closed in the cow left the others and ran me a stiff chase up the hill. But I sent a bullet after her which made her slow up and presently stop and face me. Then I gave her another right in the head, and she dropped in her tracks. As my little horse was now well winded, I alighted by the side of the cow, and Samson came up, having killed two. The others

also had done well, so we camped by that creek and began making provisions.

Here we remained for several days, going out and killing and bringing the meat home, all the time constantly on guard to prevent our horses being stolen or our camp attacked, for we were now on the outer fringes of the great herds of buffalo and might come across enemies at any time.

CHAPTER XXII.

A busy camp—Process of butchering and drying meat—How pemmican is made—Our camp in peril—Chasing a herd of buffalo up a stiff bank—Mark scores a point on me—We encounter a war party of Blackfeet—A fortunate rain-storm—A mirage gives us a false alarm—Unwritten laws as to rights of hunters.

THERE were no idle hours in our camp. Hunting by day, and on guard every other night; when not running buffalo or butchering and hauling and packing them into camp, then drying the meat and rendering grease and making pemmican, or mending carts and harness—there was always something to do. Some of our party had become rather alarmed at our venturing so far into the enemy's country, and already they were talking about returning. But I told them that we must load right up; that we had not come all this way merely to have a feed and turn back, but to prepare food for the next winter. So by precept and example we kept the whole camp stirring. Sunday was our only day of rest, when, outside the care of the horses and camp, we absolutely refrained from labor. And

now as we are actually engaged in drying meat and making pemmican, I will describe this work in detail.

In the first place, the Indian and plain hunter did not butcher the carcase in the white man's way, but followed the anatomy of the animal. There were the tongue and little boss, the big boss, the back and rump-fats, the sinew pieces, the shoulders and hams, the brisket and belly piece and ribs. Each of these came out separately under the skilful hand and knife of the hunter, and when brought to camp were cut into broad wide flakes, not more than a quarter of an inch in thickness. These flakes in turn were hung on stagings made of clean poles, and the wind and sun allowed free work at them. When dry on one side they were turned, and kept turned every hour or so during the day, and if the camp moved they were loaded into carts and taken to be spread out again on the clean grass, all being turned at some time during the day. Thus in two or three days, according to the weather, the first lot would be ready for sorting. The back-fats and rump-fats and the briskets and ribs and bosses would be folded into a regular size, and baled up into packs of from eighty to one hundred and twenty pounds weight. These bales were bound up with rawhide, and the contents were known in camp and Hudson's

Bay posts, and everywhere in the Territories, as "dried meat." Though only air and sun were utilized in the curing, still this was sweet and perfect in its effect, and the meat would keep for years.

The other parts of the meat—that is, those portions which came from the hams and shoulders, and the sinew pieces—were, when dry, taken and cooked over a slow fire. In our case we made a large gridiron by digging a long grave-like hole in the ground, in which we made a fire and across the top of it placed willows, whereon we spread the meat. After cooking it carefully and thoroughly it was put away to cool, and then pounded by flail until it became pulp. This when finished was termed "pounded meat." In the meantime all the tallow or hard fat of the animal killed was cut up into small pieces and cooked or rendered, and watched closely that it might not burn. This boiling tallow was then poured upon the pounded meat, about pound for pound, and the mass thoroughly stirred up until all the meat was saturated with the hot grease.

Bags were made of the hide, nicely fleshed and prepared, and sewed with sinew. And now the hot mass of meat and grease was shovelled into the bags. Then these were quickly sewed up, and a level piece of ground was chosen, or a

flooring of side-boards from the carts made, and these bags were placed on this and shaped and turned until cool and hard. A bag thirty inches long, eighteen wide and eight thick would weigh from 120 to 135 lbs. This was "hard grease pemmican." Sometimes dried berries, or the choke-cherry, would be mixed with the soft fat pemmican, and this would be called "berry pemmican." This pemmican, like the dried meat, without any spice or seasoning other than sun and wind or fire, would keep for years in a fresh wholesome state.

Before we left the camp by the creek we had manufactured pemmican and dried meat and hide covers and parchment skins and many lines, and what with the hunting and doing all this work and looking constantly after our stock, we were pretty busy. We then moved farther out on the plains, when we made another home camp, and repeated the experience of the last one. But as the buffalo were much scattered, we had far and wide to hunt for them. We would take it in turns, and leaving camp early in the morning, sometimes would not return until dark. Under such circumstances, both with those at home and those hunting, the nervous strain was considerable, for now we had seen many signs of the enemy and several attempts had been made to steal our horses.

Mine was the best gun in camp, and it was a double-barrelled percussion-lock muzzle loader. All the rest were armed with single-barrelled flint-lock guns. There was not one revolver or pistol among the whole party.

One day we went as far as the Red Deer River, and finding a bunch of bulls right down on the river bottom near the water's edge, we made a big circuit and started the herd. They took up a deep ravine and soon began to climb the almost perpendicular banks to the uplands above. These banks were not small affairs, but were hundreds of feet in height. In our eagerness we followed close on their heels, and some of them would stop and look around at us as if the next move would be a charge down the steep upon us. Woe to the man or horse caught in such a fix. But then if these fellows should reach the level summit much in advance of us we might not catch them again, for our horses were pretty well blown by this run and climb. I am sure it must have taken from ten to fifteen minutes to follow those big monsters (for these were the fattest we had seen) up that hill, and of course every one of us secretly in his own mind wanted to kill the very fattest. I had already singled out mine and was keeping dangerously near him, but it would not do to fire at any on such a hill; we must let them

reach the top. However, as I was next to the bulls, I thought mine would be the first chance. But in this I was beaten by old Mark, whose experienced eye had seen a better way. As we reached the summit and the bulls jumped into a hard race at once, as if the climb had been nothing, I was pushing my way after them when in came Mark ahead of me, and "bang" went his old flint-lock right into the best bull of the crowd. Of course I took the next one, and another also, and felt if I was to be beaten—why, I had rather it be by Mark than another.

We took home more good meat and fat that day than at any time on our trip. Another time we went far from camp, and ran right into a hunting party of Blackfeet. They were more surprised than we were, and left their hunt on the field and fled. As we did not know how many there were, or how near the camp might be, we made haste to load our horses, and started for home by a roundabout way, but not until dark did we make direct for our camp.

Here Providence interfered on our behalf, for before daylight next morning a heavy rain-storm set in and continued for two days and two nights, not only washing away all our tracks, but keeping the enemy pretty constantly under cover. We were thankful for the storm, and yet were miserable all through it, as we had not sufficient

fuel to keep us warm. When the third day opened with bright sunshine the whole camp was glad. Not a soul in our party had even an overcoat, much less a waterproof. There were no long boots or rubbers to be found in our outfit at that time. And to remain out with those horses in the cold rain all night long was not child's play.

With returning sunshine we moved camp westward and northward, and making a good long day settled at evening in as good a spot as we could find for the hiding and protection of our camp. Then we went to work finishing up our drying and pounding and preparing provisions, and arranged our loads in order to make them water-tight and storm-proof as much as possible with parchments and hides. When this was all done we resumed our homeward journey.

When moving one day, word came in that we were being followed by a troop of Blackfeet, and immediately I sent Mark out to reconnoitre. Riding back a couple of miles he signalled to us "They are coming," and again he signalled, "They are many." The first was done by riding his horse to and fro, and the second by throwing dust in the air. This put us to making strenuous efforts to be ready for attack.

We arranged our carts as a bulwark on one side at a spot where a small hill gave us protec-

tion on the other. We gathered and picketed our horses close up, saddling the speediest, and got all our ammunition ready. Then Samson went out to join Mark. Presently the two came in on the jump to tell us that a mirage had deceived everybody, that the trailing party was nothing more formidable than a big pack of wolves! Our alarm thus allayed, we journeyed on, not unmindful, however, of the episode, for I had run around rushing in the horses and placing the carts quite regardless of the numerous beds of cactus, and now the soles of my feet were like fire because of the many small points which had entered them.

The unwritten law as to hunting rights which obtained at that time was as follows: When on the journey from one part of the country to another, say, to and from a Mission station or between Hudson's Bay posts to the herds of buffalo and back, everything killed was common property—that is, all who came to the kill had common share of the meat; but when fairly into the buffalo range, and at the work of making provisions, then each man handled and kept his own hunt. There was also a well understood law that the owner of a buffalo horse also owned whatever was killed from the back of his horse. Many a time after I became proficient in the art of selecting the fat ones, and

had gained a reputation as a shot, Indians would bring me their best horses to ride in a hunt. And as I was often in camp merely visiting, many an exciting time I had with the strange horses, and many a man and his whole family came to hear me sing and preach because I had won their admiration by my handling of their pet horse.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Into the timber country again—Craving for vegetable food—Wild rhubarb a treat—I shoot a big beaver—My horse objects to carrying it—A race for the life of my child—Terrific fight between my dogs and a huge wolverine—Reach Pigeon Lake and find father there—Anxiety felt for our party—A meagre bill of fare—A visit to Victoria—I narrowly escape drowning—Father leaves for Ontario, taking with him my three sisters—Francis leaves us to return to Victoria—My varied offices among the Indians.

On the twenty-sixth day from our leaving the points of timber we again entered them, and as all in our party were "forest people," there was joy in every heart. We are tremendously governed by sentiment. Our spirits like the barometer rise and fall, subject to environment. And now with carts and travois and pack-animals loaded, and with our stock and scalps intact, we were once more in the outer stretchings of the great northern woodlands. Moreover, we were so hungry for something vegetable that we eagerly partook of the first edible food that was found. We roasted and boiled and ate freely of what is known as the wild rhubarb,

and also ate the inner bark of the poplar and drank the sap.

I remember with what joy I came upon a bed of wild rhubarb as we were approaching the timber. Flinging myself from my horse, I cut a bunch of the rhubarb, and quickly making a willow fire, roasted and ate ravenously of it, and felt it did me good. The same afternoon, as our party was travelling on, I rode away to one side to watch for beaver. The ripple of the water breaking over the dam told me where they were. Fastening my horse I quietly drew near, and by and by heard the splash of one as he came out of his house into the pond. Presently I saw the beaver swimming towards me, and, waiting my chance as he drew near, I shot him.

But now that I had my beaver I found that the horse I rode would not let me place him on his back. I worked for a long time to pacify the sensitive brute, but of no avail. Finally I determined to tie the end of my lariat to the beaver, and mounting first, pull him into the saddle; and after a lot of backing and plunging I finally succeeded in landing the beaver across in front of me, and thus rode on into camp, but determining all the way to take a quieter horse the next time I went beaver hunting.

On we rolled, crossing the streams tributary

to the Battle River, and when we had crossed the river, I concluded to send Francis round by the new cart road we had made in coming out, while with my own family I should strike straight in by Bear's Hill for Pigeon Lake and the Mission. All of the Indians who had not carts would come the same way, but follow more slowly.

While on this trip I had two experiences worth relating. I was riding ahead and had my little daughter Flora in the saddle with me. My sleigh dogs, who were now big and fat, were with me. Presently, passing near a shallow lakelet, I caught sight of a moulting goose making for the grass. Dropping my little girl down by the path, and telling her to pick flowers and stay quiet, that "papa would come back soon," I galloped over to the spot where I saw the goose disappear. Of course, all the dogs came with me, and very soon we found the goose. I quickly wrung its neck, and remounting my horse dashed back to where my child was, and away bounded the pack of dogs also. The goose hunt had excited them, and they were racing one another; and now I saw that if I did not reach the child before they did, the strong possibility was the wild brutes would tear the little one to pieces. The race was short and quick, but my intense fear made it seem like an age.

The dogs and I reached the child about the same time, and I flung myself from the horse and clutched my little girl, and then fairly danced for joy that I had her safe in my arms again.

Going on we came to Bear's Hill Creek, and as the day was warm both horse and dogs began to drink. As I sat in the saddle talking to my child, I happened to look down the stream, and there I saw a big wolverine come out to the water's edge to quench its thirst. Close to me was a hound called Bruce. I quietly said "Bruce," and pointed down the creek. The quick-eyed fellow saw the wolverine, bounded away, and was close upon him before the wolverine saw him. Then he made a jump for the brush, but Bruce ran his nose between his enemy's hind legs and fairly turned him over with the impetus of his run. Then the whole pack came up, and I sat on my horse and looked on a terrific fight between the dozen dogs and the one wolverine. It did not seem fair, but the wolverine was a big fellow and a born fighter, and he was fighting for his life. He scratched and bit every one of those dogs, and held his own for some time, but at last a big black dog, a powerful brute, got his massive jaws on both sides of the wolverine's brain and crunched it right in, and the wild fellow was

dead. I verily believe that in all the big North-West there will not be a single mourner for him, such is the Ishmaelitish record of these animals.

As we were approaching the lake the next afternoon I noted fresh tracks coming up from the Edmonton and Victoria trail. Anxious to see whose these might be, I urged on my horse, and when I came in sight of the house I saw some horses standing at a smudge, and recognized them as belonging to our people at Victoria. This made me jubilant, and I gave a regular Indian "whoop," and then I heard father say, "There, that is John." As I jumped from my horse father and a young man, by the name of James Connor, ran out of our little home overjoyed to see me. Away down at Victoria word had come of several serious battles between the tribes. Scalps and horses had frequently changed owners, and strange rumors had come in from the plains. These had become connected with our small party, and our people were so intensely anxious about us that father and James had started for Pigeon Lake, and finding the place deserted were now setting nets and drying fish in order to go out on our trail and seek us.

Father embraced me as if I had come from the dead, and James was only a little less demonstrative. They were at their meal when

they heard my shout, and here is the bill of fare:

WOODVILLE MISSION, PIGEON LAKE.

DINNER, JULY, 1867.

Boiled Jackfish without salt.
Boiled Rhubarb without sugar.

DESSERT.

Thinking and planning and talking about loved ones, said to be massacred, but of which there is no certainty.

Father brought us news from the outside world, and of the people on the Saskatchewan. He said he was ready to start for Ontario, and was going to take my three sisters with him that they might go to school. He was arranging with Mr. Steinhauer to come as often as he could to Victoria during his absence, and he hoped I would visit them when I could.

The next afternoon I accompanied father and Jim on their return journey. We camped for the night with Francis at the edge of the dense and heavy timber, beyond which point we had not as yet been able to bring our carts. From here, as father said provisions were not plentiful at Victoria, we took a cart with about half a load, and went on in a blinding rain-storm, camping that night in a flood, with no tent and but a small covering for the cart.

"I succeeded in getting hold of the end of a tree." (*Page 285.*)

The next day we had a lively time crossing the White Mud. When, after packing everything across on horseback, and holding the provisions up over our shoulders, I afterwards undertook to drive across with the empty cart, we were swept away by the raging current, and I became separated from both horse and cart. My heavy leather clothes impeded my movements, and I came very near swinging around the point for the last time in this world. Finally, when nearly exhausted with fighting the wild stream, I succeeded in getting hold of the end of a tree which extended out into the stream, and made the shore in safety. Our horse and cart fortunately, too, came out on the right side, and after some mending of harness we proceeded on our way.

We kept on the south side of the Saskatchewan and ferried at Victoria. Since father left to look for us no word had reached Victoria either of him or of us, and our arrival was hailed with joy. Everybody around the Mission was busy preparing for father's long trip east. He contemplated driving all the way to St. Paul on the Mississippi; and to start on such a trip in those days of bridgeless and ferryless streams, and with very few supply depots, required no little preparation, the chief items of which, however, were horses and pemmican, and

plenty of self-help, backed up by a strong faith in God. Father was pretty well supplied with these essentials.

He took with him my three sisters and Miss Tait, daughter of the Hudson's Bay Company officer stationed at Victoria. He also had two Indian boys he intended to leave where he might meet railway or steam transport. We were very busy for three or four days in getting things ready for this long trip, and then we saw them off, and came back to the Mission house feeling lonely enough, especially mother. Father would be at least a year absent, and she would sorely miss her three bright girls whose clatter and romp and play had gladdened and illumined the isolated home so often, in spite of many anxious periods of suspense and patient waiting. No doubt it was a tremendous sacrifice on her part to see them go so far away, and that for years; but, as was consistent with her whole life, she meekly bore these trials and went on with her work as usual.

Returning, I fell in with a party travelling to Edmonton, and from there I struck out alone for Pigeon Lake, but chanced to meet Francis at the limit of our cart road, packing in the provisions, etc., to the Mission. I found all well, and quite a number of Indians in from different points, but these, as usual, did not remain long,

but soon were scattered. It was about this time that Francis concluded to go back to Victoria, and with the exception of one Indian family and a couple of boys I was training we were alone; but as we knew camps were here and there to the south of us, we felt comparatively safe from the enemy. I say the enemy, but our enemies were not always easy to locate, for the whole country was in a lawless condition, and whims and moods, or trouble and disappointment, might make us enemies at any time. It was best always to be on the alert; to trust in Providence and "keep our powder dry" was always in order.

To put up hay was the next consideration, and my boys and I went at it in earnest. Wooden forks, and poles wherewith to handle and stack, were all we had, but nevertheless we made a good supply of hay, and by the time we were through the Indians began to come in. From the last of August until winter was fairly upon us our congregations were usually large. Our work evidently was telling, for there was very much less conjuring and gambling, and the people were awakening to a better life.

Our duties to and amongst these people were manifold. We had to supply the object lesson in all new industries. In fishing, net making and mending, chopping and sawing, planting and

weeding, and even in economical hunting, we found that we must not only take a part but lead. I was doctor, lawyer, judge and arbitrator, peace commissioner, pastor, teacher and brother man. Many a perplexing case of sickness made us feel our ignorance, but we did our best. Crees and Stonies were constantly quarrelling over horses or women, and it was my duty (so everybody seemed to think) to step in and interfere and investigate. Charges of secret poisoning and of conjuring loved ones to their death were frequent, and many a solemn time we spent in disabusing ignorant minds of groundless suspicions, and also many an hour we labored to explain the benefit of Christian civilization in the ordering of the lives of a community.

Some of the strongly conservative pagans and ardent gamblers and staunch polygamists and wild "devil-may-cares" at times vigorously resented (as well they might) our interference. But such men as Adam and Jacob and Mark, among the Stonies who then frequented that part of the country; and of the Crees, Samson, Paul and others stood by us loyally, and our influence grew apace. John, "the young preacher," was becoming quite an authority among the wandering tribes.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Our first interment—Jacob's tragic death—Hostile Flatheads in quest of horses, scalps and glory—Stonies attacked by a party of Blackfeet—A hot fusilade—Mark's father is killed—Destitution prevalent—Hunting lynx—My dogs seized with distemper—All have to be shot—Another provision hunt organized—Among the buffalo—I narrowly escape being shot—Heterogeneous character of our camp—Mutual distrust and dislikes—United by fear of a common foe—The effects of Christianity.

THAT autumn one of our best young men, Jacob by name, was killed by the Flatheads. His friends sent me word that they were bringing the body into the Mission. We dug our first grave on the hill, and there in the quiet of this "God's acre" we laid to rest the remains of the brave young fellow who had died in defence of his people. This was our first interment, in the fall of 1867, and we came here in the spring of 1865. This was significant of the migratory character of the people, as also of the healthfulness of the highland country.

Our Indians had camped about twenty-five miles from the Mission, and in a comparatively wooded section, where they believed themselves

in large measure exempt from attacks of the plain Indians, and had no thought of attack by warriors from the Pacific slope. However, as one told me, they had "felt someone in the vicinity," and were watching their horses closely, keeping them staked right up to camp at night.

One of our people, called William One-eye, was on guard when he saw what he took to be a stranger stooping at the feet of one of the horses. He approached quietly and spoke to him, as he wanted to make sure before firing at him. But the fellow answered by shooting at him, and with so good an aim that the ball grazed William's forehead, cutting away a tuft of his hair, which was bound with ermine skin, and stunning him for an instant. Ere he could recover himself the thief jumped on the horse and dashed away at furious speed.

William soon gave the alarm, but already everybody was stirring because of the shot, and now it was found that several horses were gone. The whole camp was aroused and the pursuit became general. It was in this running fight that Jacob was shot. The Stonies, on their part, killed two of the Flatheads, bringing in their horses and saddles, and the ammunition and tent which were packed on these.

The marauders had come hundreds of miles through the mountains on this quest for horses,

scalps and glory, and as the trails were now becoming clearly defined from almost every direction into our Mission, it looked as if we might be visited at any time by these lawless scamps.

Young Jacob came of a large and plucky family, and it was hard work to restrain these from going on a retaliatory expedition, but the leaven of Christianity was working sufficiently to keep them in check. Of this we had ample evidence some six weeks later, when the same camp of Stonies was attacked by a large war party of Crees, who said that they mistook them for Blackfeet. But this could hardly be possible, for the Stonies were having evening worship at the time and were singing and praying. Mark said this accounted for the small mortality of their fusilade on the camp, as most of them were low down on their knees and the balls passed over their heads, which the holes in their lodges plainly showed.

The Stonies repulsed their foes, and heard them shouting back, "This was a mistake; we thought you were Blackfeet, our common enemies." It was only when the Stonies returned to camp they discovered that their aged patriarch, Mark's father, "The-man-without-a-hole-in-his-ear," was killed. The old man was on his knees praying when the ball went right

through his vitals. Evidently he had died without a struggle. Mark said that if they had known this at the time they could not have spared the Crees, but coming back to camp and finding that their father had died on his knees while in the act of prayer, they felt that they must respect his act and faith and not take revenge. Surely this was strong evidence of a great change in the feelings of the Indians, bred as they had been to retaliation and deep hatred of their foes.

All through the autumn we dwelt in the midst of alarms, and it was not until winter came, with its cold and snow, that we felt in a measure secure for a time from these wandering parties. On November 25th another little girl came to our humble home, and was given the name of Ruth.

At this time, what with holding services at home and visiting camps in our vicinity, attending to the fall and winter fisheries, providing wood, and hauling hay (for we had secured another cow and a couple of oxen, and I was keeping a horse in the stable), my time was fully taken up. In fact I was hard driven, and was very glad when a sufficiency of fish was stored, so that I could pack my nets and other fishing paraphernalia away for a few months. Then, as per instructions from my Chairman, I

made a dash for Victoria, spending two Sabbaths there, and taking Edmonton *en route* both ways. At this time I did not dare attempt to preach in English, but felt quite at home in the Cree.

During the winter of 1867-68, the buffalo still kept far out, and there was considerable destitution all over the country. Our storehouse and fish-house were ever and anon called upon to come to the rescue. We never failed to emphasize the stern necessity of making provision for the future, but with a people having no abiding place this was a hard lesson to learn. The rabbits, fortunately, were more numerous than usual, and with them came the lynx, both helping out in the preservation of life from actual starvation.

I killed quite a number of lynx that winter, and got many of these on the ice of the lake. Whenever I saw an object moving on the snow-covered ice, I concluded it was either a lynx or a wolf, and as I had an opera glass I could very soon determine which, for the wolf had a long, bushy tail, and the lynx a very stumpy one—in fact, hardly any. Therefore, if the object I saw was tailless, I saddled my horse and rode for him. My dogs would also join the hunt, and when we came within a half-mile or so, the lynx generally noticed us and started off with

tremendous leaps as if he would leave all creation behind. His strong feature, however, was in the height rather than the length of his jumping, and soon his half circles in the air came to a stop. While I was coming up on the steady jump, slow and sure, he would crook up his back, straighten up the fur on it and turn fiercely on me, but a shot from my gun would quickly keel him over. Later I found that one of my dogs could kill a lynx at one bite across the small of the back, and then I let him do the killing, for ammunition was none too plentiful in those days.

I made several trips to Victoria and visited a number of camps, and in March took my family through to Whitefish Lake by dog-train. When we reached home, towards the last of the month, winter was breaking: but what nearly broke our hearts was an epidemic, a sort of distemper, that took hold of my sleigh-dogs, and one after the other I had to shoot the poor brutes. They seemed to have a kind of hydrophobia. They did not attack human beings, but we thought it best to kill them. I felt the parting with the faithful fellows more than the loss of their usefulness. A pagan Cree who had come to us asked permission to skin two of my biggest and swiftest dogs, and I told him he could. The reader will note this, and see later what his purpose was.

And now our people were straggling in to the Mission. That spring a number of mountain Stonies visited us for the first time, and our week-day and Sabbath services were full of interest. More of our own people than ever before were desirous of doing some gardening, and we helped all as far as our means allowed us to do. Moreover, a good many expressed a desire to accompany us to the plains for an early summer provision trip, and as we wanted the provisions for the year, and as this was the very best way to have a number of our people with us for a time, I arranged for such a trip, to start about the middle of May.

This time our camp was quite large, numbering about forty lodges, and we felt quite able to go anywhere on the plains. We followed for the first hundred and fifty miles our route of the previous summer. We lived on ducks, rabbits, beaver and a few deer and antelope, until about thirty miles out from the last point of woods, where we found our first buffalo, and from thence on until we reached herds of them we were never without food.

At the spot where we found the first bulls Samson and little William and myself were of the party, and I came very near being killed. We had come suddenly upon the animals, and I was crossing in front of William to higher

ground when he, not noticing me, fired at them, and the ball whizzed right past my ear. I turned and saw that William was fairly pale with fright. We were too much engaged for words. "Almost!" he cried, and I answered, "Yes, almost," and we dashed after the flying bulls. This narrow escape bothered poor William for some time, and I verily believe had he killed me by accident at that time Samson would have shot him right then and there, for he was angry at the other's carelessness, as he termed it.

In our camp at that time we had seven distinct classes of men. There were mountain Stonies and wood Stonies, plain Crees and wood Crees, French and Indian mixed bloods, and English and Indian mixed bloods; myself the only white man in the party. Environment, language and dialect had each differentiated these people. And now we were, because of the Gospel and for Christ's sake, seeking to bring them together. It was serious work at times. They could not possibly see eye to eye. Old feuds kept stirring their bile. Old memories of wrongs and slights and bloody scenes were constantly being brought most vividly before their minds, and my every resource was tried in quieting and quelling and pacifying them. Even the children partook of mutual distrust and hatred. We were leagued against the common enemy;

but we might have a row among ourselves at any time, and I was forever on my guard so as not to intensify or afford any excuse for what was clearly apparent. In fact I was hoping for signs of the enemy to help allay this condition for the time being, when sure enough we began to track fresh camps and hunting parties of the Blackfeet tribes. As I had thought, this brought our discordant elements more into line, and we organized and watched and hunted together under the spur of a common danger.

Of course, our meetings every day and all through Sunday, our constant uplifting of the Gospel, and its resultant forces, were telling upon this conglomeration of humanity, but the in-breeding of centuries is not to be weeded out in a few weeks, nor yet in a few years. Early in life I was given to learn the lesson of patience.

CHAPTER XXV.

Through new country—"Greater Canada"—Antelopes—Startling effects of mirage—War parties keep us on the alert—Remarkable speed of a plain Cree—A curious superstition—A Cree's gruesome story—Returning with carts fully loaded—Followed by hostile Indians—I sight and chase a "sitting" bull—My shot wounds him—Paul's son thrown under the brute's feet—Firing Stony's clever shot to the rescue—We arrive at the Mission—Road-making.

We were now in what was new country to me, and indeed to nearly all our camp. Few of these Stonies had ever been so far out on the plains before. We were crossing new valleys, climbing over new ranges of hills, camping by new creeks and springs, and every day I was turning over new leaves of the topography and geography of this "greater Canada." What an immense pasturage this, wherein the "cattle of the Lord upon a thousand hills" were grazing! There were millions of these cattle, and yet so big was the field that you might travel for days and weeks and not see one of them. But their tracks were everywhere—paths and dust-pans and bones and chips were omnipresent as you

journeyed. Over these plains also roamed large and small flocks of antelopes. Beautiful, graceful and agile creatures these looked as they would gather on the crest of a hill and curiously survey our passing train. How often under the spell of the mirage these appeared as a body of Indian horsemen, and many an alarm they caused to the wandering bands of natives as they moved with their heads erect and on the steady regular lope across the plains. One would almost swear they were horsemen. It took a first-class horse to catch buffalo, but it required one of exceptional speed and wind to come up to these antelopes.

Within three weeks of our start from the Mission we were hard at work making provisions. Several times the Blackfeet and their allies came close to us, but such under Providence was the care we took of our camp and hunting expedition that these did not dare to attack us. As our party would act only on the defensive, there was no collision between us. One evening some were seen close to the camp, and as I generally kept the saddle on one of my best horses, very soon I and some of my men were out in the direction they were seen; but darkness dropping fast, they easily disappeared. Our demonstration was largely for the purpose of letting the hostiles know they had been seen and that we were prepared for them. What did

astonish me, however, was that the plain Cree whom I mentioned in the chapter preceding this was on the spot as quickly as any of our horsemen, though he was on foot. When I expressed surprise, he quietly pointed to the strip of dog-skin which he had over his shoulders with the tail attached hanging behind (this was the back of the dog-skin, from tip of nose to tip of tail, now nicely tanned and lined with colored cloth). "This," said he, "is the cause. If I had put on the swifter dog's skin I should have been here before you." I then noticed that he had the bigger and slower dog's skin as part of his dress, and he believed (if I did not) that the wearing of this gave him speed. He claimed that the spirit of his dream told him so. I told him that the "Great Spirit" had given him a good set of lungs and a pair of strong, quick legs, and that was why he could run with horses.

This same fellow was a very good shot, and an expert at selecting fat animals—in which, after all, lies the real skill of a buffalo hunter. Many a man could kill on the dead jump, and by constant practice learn to load a gun quickly, but to pick good fat meat while dust and powder and perspiration were each doing what they could to blind your eyes, and while madly galloping over rough country with numberless

badger-holes, dust-pans, cut-banks, etc., seemingly seeking to break either the horse's or the rider's neck or limbs, required practice, and quickness of vision, and ready judgment. This man had these qualities, and several times I put him on one of my buffalo runners. Thus we got acquainted, and presently he began to come to our meetings, where he was a thoughtful listener. Once he told me of a strange experience he had. Said he, "Several of us started in the depth of winter from the extreme point of timber on the Touchwood Hills to hunt for buffalo. Our camp was very short of meat. We carried wood on flat sleds, and when we killed the first buffalo I went back to camp with two sled loads for those at home. All day I travelled on the bare plain, hoping to reach timber that night; but my loads were heavy and my horses tired, and in the afternoon a storm came on, and I saw that I could not make the main woods that night. Then I bethought me of a small island of timber to one side of my course which would afford me shelter. But then I also knew, a couple of moons before this, a noted Indian had died at that point, and his tent was left standing for him to rest in; that his best horse had been led to the door and shot, and the line fastened round his neck passed to the dead man. Thinking of this I felt a strong

reluctance to go near the place, but the storm was raging and my horses were tired, and at last I made up my mind to go and seek shelter with the dead man.

"When I reached the spot there was the lodge, and I drew up my horses close to the door; but before I unhitched them I first addressed the occupant of the tent. I told him it was not in the spirit of curiosity or bravado or irreverence that I thus came near his resting-place, but that I was a poor lonely brother seeking shelter for the night; that if he would accord me hospitality I would be very careful and thankful. I then proceeded to unhitch my horses. I noticed that there was a fine pile of dry wood near the tent, and knew there would be more within, for such is the custom. After fixing my horses for the night I went to the door of the lodge and again apologized to my dead friend. Then I removed the fastening of the door and stood, fearing to enter.

"It was now late at night and very dark outside, and how much darker it would be in the lodge I shuddered to think. But once more speaking humbly to the dead man I ventured in, and, as I had thought, there was plenty of dry wood near the door; so I made some shavings and took the dry grass I had carried for the purpose from my bosom, and soon I had a light, but

did not dare to look up. As my fire brightened I took my pipe and filled it, and lighting it drew a few puffs and then looked up. There sat the dead man with the line from his horse's neck in his hand, and with his bow and quiver standing beside him. He looked as if alive, and I now held my pipe-stem toward him and said, 'Smoke, my brother, and believe me when I tell you that the storm has driven me to presume upon your good-nature. I hope you will not think strange of my venturing as I have into your home. I will bring in some meat and cook food that we may eat together.' This I began to do, and after awhile my feeling of dread began to wear away. When the meat was cooked I set a portion by the side of the dead man and then ate my own meal. While doing this I told him of our hunt. I talked to the dead man as if he were listening to me, and I think his spirit was. Then I again lit my pipe and offered him a smoke. Now as the night was far spent, I made my bed, stretched myself by the fire, and went to sleep. I did not wake until daylight, and there sat my friend looking at me, as I thought. I told him I was very tired and hoped he would not mind me sleeping so long as I had; now I would again cook, and we would eat together once more. This I did, placing his portion beside him. Then I thanked him for giving me shelter, and telling

him I would often think of his goodness to me, bade him good-bye. Fixing the door of the tent as I had found it, I hunted up my horses and set out for the camp. When I told our people where I had spent the night, they were astonished at my foolhardiness and said, 'It was not right to thus trouble the departed.' I told them I would not do it again if I could help it."

This poor fellow and his companion were killed some years afterwards by a war party rushing upon them, not far from the spot where we now were. The Blackfeet afterwards told me that he died bravely as became a man. Crowfoot himself was with the party which killed him.

We were very fortunate in our hunting. The buffalo were not numerous, but we found enough to load us fully, and by the first of the sixth week from the Mission we were on the home-stretch, making for the woods as fast as our heavily laden carts would permit. The enemy followed us for several days, but we did not give them a chance to either steal horses or charge upon our camp. As we began to leave the buffalo far behind us they gave up the chase for the time; but we did not slacken our discipline one whit until far into the woods.

Before we left the treeless plains we camped one afternoon near a big lake. On the side on

which we were the country was low and flat for many miles. Riding on alone I came to a small knoll, and from this I saw a dark speck in the distance, which the more I looked at it the more it shaped into a "sitting" bull. Finally, as the sun was still well up, I rode towards the object, and then I saw some riders start straight from our camp for the same object. When we converged, I said to the leader, "Where are you going?" and he answered, "To the same place as you are." Then he asked, "What did you see that made you ride across this way?" and I answered, "What did you see that made you start out from camp at this hour?" I then told them that I thought there was a bull over there, but as the country was very flat no object at that distance could be seen.

I galloped on and the Indians came after; but presently the older one said, "We had better go back to camp; we are now too far away from it. They may be attacked before we return. It is now evening." But we kept on, and soon my "sitting" bull was in sight, but there was an arm of the lake between us and him, and again the old Indian insisted on returning. "It is likely he will see you long before you come near; you cannot catch him to-night. Let us turn back." But I had gone too far to thus turn back, and I said "No," and suiting the

action to the word got off my horse to lead him over the soft place. Firing Stony and old Paul's son followed me, while the others stayed with the old man. Then he, to balk us, when we were about two hundred yards from him, fired his gun to scare the bull, and sure enough the bull jumped up. Firing Stony said, "It's no use, he has frightened him, and the race will be too long." I was more determined than ever, and rather vexed with the rascal for firing his gun, so I said to those with me, "He will not have his way. My will shall overcome his in this matter. The bull will not frighten until we rush him," and sure enough the bull turned around and quietly sank into his bed. Then said I, "Do you see that? Come on, we will kill him." And while the others were now riding back fast to camp, we three went on picking our way around the soft places, and presently were across, and mounting our horses charged the bull.

This time the bull was started in earnest and went for all his speed, but the ground was good, and as my little Bob very soon overhauled him, I saw he was fat and worth coming a great way for. I was now some distance in advance of my companions, as Bob was the speediest horse in camp. As I came up I shot the bull, but struck him too far behind, so that my ball only

"With unerring aim he shot the bull through the head." (*Page 257.*)

broke his thigh. He went squat at first, but flung himself around in a flash. I went flying past him with the impetus of my horse's speed, leaving the big fellow facing my companions, and as I pulled up I turned and saw young Paul being thrown straight at the bull's head. His horse had come up as the bull faced around, and was so startled by the brute's angry roar that he stopped quick, and, the saddle-girth snapping, the rider was thrown straight ahead. There he lay with the bull standing over him on three legs, trying to get his horns under his body. For a moment I was horrified, for I knew that all the blame would rest upon me if any hurt should come to our party. I shouted, "Lie still—keep flat!" and the boy heard me; and though the bull was nosing him, he failed to put his horns under the prostrate form. In the meantime Firing Stony was coming up as fast as his horse could run. I saw him lean over his pony and shove out his old flint-lock, and thought it looked as if he might shoot the lad, for the bull's head was right there also. But with unerring aim he shot the bull through the brain, and as Paul rolled away the animal dropped dead. We were thankful for this escape, and in a short time were on our way to camp with our horses heavily loaded with prime meat. Contrary to the old man's

premonitions, too, we found all well when we reached there.

In a few days we were in the woods and luxuriating again on wild rhubarb and poplar sap, but finding less enjoyment from the attentions of innumerable mosquitoes and "bull-dogs," as this was one of the rainy seasons and insect life abounded. Out on the plains the buffalo were sufficient at that time to sanitate the land. They drank up the surface-water and ate the grass, and there was no necessity for the smaller insect life; but here in the woods, with surface-water and rank growth in rich abundance, Nature's force of sanitation was a tremendously big one, and they bled us on every hand. Our forty-lodge camp was but a speck on their big field of enterprise.

We found the creeks full, and this caused no end of work in ferrying and bridging. Up to this time our cart road had terminated about fifteen miles from the Mission, but now I determined to chop a road right through; and when those who had no carts left us at Battle River to take the straight pack-trail to the lake, I told them to begin at that end and make the road to meet us. This they did, and after some days' hard work chopping out the forest, and corduroying swamps, and bridging streams, I had the pleasure of mounting the lead cart and

drawing this right up to our Mission house door. In this humble instance the "star of empire" was trending westward. Soon the Indians who had been with us cached their provisions, and scattered into the woods to hunt moose and other wood game. But we were seldom without some of these restless nomads of the plains.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Another visit to Victoria—Fall in with a war party of Kootenays and Flatheads—Samson and I go moose-hunting—A Sabbath afternoon experience—A band of moose enjoy Sabbath immunity—I start out to meet father returning from the East—The glorious Saskatchewan Valley—Call at Fort Pitt—Equinoctial storms—Entertained by a French half-breed family—Meet Mr. Hardisty and one of my sisters—Camp-fire chat—Meeting with father—Rev. Peter Campbell and others with his party—Father relates his experience in the East—Rev. Geo. Young sent to Red River Settlement and Rev. E. R. Young to Norway House.

When we were nicely settled at home I made a hurried trip on horseback to Victoria, for I knew mother and the rest of our people would be extremely anxious about us; and it was with joy they met me as I rode into the older Mission. Father was expected home in September, and mother said he hoped I would meet him somewhere down the Saskatchewan with some fresh horses. Here I learned that there had been considerable fighting on the plains east and south of where we had been. A number of scalps had

been taken on both sides, and the reports of these encounters had made our people very anxious about our party.

I spent a Sabbath with the Victoria people, and then made for home. At Edmonton I lost my horses for a whole day, and did not succeed in finding them until evening. In the meantime a war party of Southern Kootenays and Flatheads had come across and spent a few hours at the fort, where they were on their very good behavior. Had I not been delayed by the losing of my horses I should have been alone amongst them that morning, and when I sized the wild fellows up I was exceedingly thankful that I had been frustrated in my desire to push on. These strangers went back the same evening, but when I swam my horses across about sunrise the next morning, and started up the hill to take the trail for Pigeon Lake, I almost ran into the same war party. They had gone across my road just as I came up, as I could tell from the tracks on the grass, on which the dew was still heavy. I immediately took to cover, and went on the steady gallop, never stopping except to change horses until I was thirty-five or forty miles from Edmonton. The greater part of the time I kept away from the trail, and early in the afternoon was once more at home, having swam my horses across the big Saskatchewan that morning, and

with the two made the sixty miles in less than three-quarters of a day. This same war party took a number of horses from a camp of Indians situated at the time some fifty miles south of us, and I was very thankful they did not take mine nor yet have a shot at myself.

And now what with hay-making and doctoring and preaching and teaching, our time went quickly. Soon September was with us, and I was thinking of starting for Victoria, when Samson came in, and we went for a moose-hunt. On Saturday afternoon he killed a huge buck moose, and we camped beside the carcase and spent a very quiet Sunday in the woods. During the afternoon I took our horses down to a lake about half a mile from our camp, there being no water nearer, and while the horses were drinking I sat upon the bank admiring the scene. The lake before me was several miles long and about half a mile wide. The banks were quite high and densely covered with forest trees in the full rich glory of their autumn tints. The day was calm, and the whole picture was exceedingly beautiful, specially fitting to the Sabbath evening. My horses, having slaked their thirst, were lazily browsing on the rushes which grew on the edge of the water, and I was being lifted up into a higher, purer atmosphere of experience consistent with my environment, when suddenly my ear

caught the splash of water, and looking across the lake I saw five moose doing exactly the same as my horses. Having waded out into the water they were biting at the rushes, and as I watched them one swam out into the lake straight for me. Soon the whole five were quietly and gracefully swimming towards me, and I confess that as I watched those fine big moose coming, I for a moment wished for my gun (which I had left in camp), and wished, also, that this was any other day than Sunday. But as all this was of no use, I decided to keep perfectly still and note how close those moose would come before detecting my presence. Soon they were touching bottom close to my horses, and then there was a moment of mutual surprise, as horses and moose stared at one another. Both, however, again took to nipping rushes, and by and by the big cow moose which was leading came up the bank within a few feet of where I was, and shook herself, sprinkling me copiously with the water from her big sides; another followed, and then all of them went on into the woods, quietly browsing as they disappeared from my sight. For them, also, it was the Sabbath day.

Monday we went home, our four horses having all they wanted to carry in the meat of the one monster moose. The fellow was in such

good condition that I made a big bag of pemmican with his inside fat.

Soon after this I started with my family and two Indian boys for Victoria. Reaching that point, I took with me the two boys and started with the three carts and some loose horses to meet father. Mother had not heard from him since I was last at Victoria, but we thought he must now be on the north side of the Saskatchewan, between Carlton and Fort Pitt. Our horses were in good flesh, and this was hardened on them as we drove early and late down through the northern slopes of the great Saskatchewan valley, the lovely country which had so enamored my more youthful senses when first in 1862 I rode through its rich pastures and over its richer soils. Six years of wider range and larger view had been mine since then, but now as I ride over the many leagues my previous judgment is but strengthened. As we pass Saddle and Egg lakes and cross the Dog Rump, and Moose and Frog creeks, and wind between and over the Two Hills, and all the time behold fresh and picturesque landscapes, and note the wealth of nature's store, self-evident on every hand, my patriotism is enthused and my faith invigorated. And to one born on the frontier, and already having witnessed great changes, it is easy to imagine this easily reclaimed part of our great

heritage dotted with prosperous homes. All day long (and somehow those autumn days were unsurpassable in the combination of their glorious make-up) as I rode on in advance of my boys and carts, I was locating homes, and selecting sites for village corners, and erecting schoolhouses and lifting church spires, and engineering railway routes, and hoping I might live to see some of this come to pass, for come it would.

While my boys went straight on I rode in to Fort Pitt, hoping that I might find word of father's coming up the country, but receiving none, I spent an hour or two with my friend John Sinclair, who was for the summer in charge of the fort. Then I rode on fast and steady, and late in the evening rejoined my boys. On we went, leaving Frenchman's Butte far in the rear, across the Red Deer Creek, past Horse Hill, through Turtle River valley, and across the river, all the while constantly on the lookout for signs of our friends or tidings of them.

Mornings and evenings and long nights and many miles came and were passed, and still no signs. Then the equinoctial storms burst upon us, with winds from the north and ice-cold rain in torrents. We drew up our carts in the shelter of bluffs of timber, and hastily covering them built our fire, and piling on the dry wood became ourselves the clothes-horses on which to

dry our soaked garments. Then when partially warmed and dried we would resume our journey. And now our matches were all but run out, and wet and cold we sought shelter under the lee of a wooded hill, and making cover did what we could to ensure the success of our last match. But alas! the first scratch sent the brittle thing into many pieces, and it took time and preparation to ignite some old cotton with a percussion gun. Hands were cold and wet and everything was wet, but after what seemed hours our fire blazed, and all through that long night we kept it blazing as in turn we gathered wood and piled it on to slowly dry and burn. And those boys! children of the wood and plain, full of healthy optimism,

> "Theirs not to sulk or sigh,
> Theirs to grin, and bear, and fry."

We kept those soaked logs frying until day came, and fortunately for us the storm stayed and we rolled on in hope. That afternoon we saw a lodge to one side of our course, and while the boys kept on, I rode over to it and found a French half-breed and his family, who received me gladly and treated me as if I was one of their family. They were on their way from the Red River to Edmonton. They made for me a pancake, for they had a small quantity of flour.

What a treat this was may be imagined when it is considered that I had not tasted bread for months.

They gave me a bunch of matches, and, better still, they told me that father was heard from at the South Branch; that in all probability he would now be this side of Fort Carlton. This was something definite to travel on, and thanking my kind entertainers, I hurried on, catching up with and passing the boys and carts. That same evening I met my brother-in-law, Mr. Hardisty, and one of my sisters, Georgiana, who, unable to stand the damp and cold of Ontario, was returning to the North-West. With these there were quite a number of Hudson's Bay Company gentlemen, and the whole party were posting westward in quick style. They had left father the day before. As my boys were far behind, I turned back with this company fresh from the outside world, to glean the news and to visit with my friends. When we met my boys I sent them on to camp at Bear's Paddling Lake, while I continued with Hardisty's party, camping with them for the night.

Some of these had been at the Hudson's Bay council at Fort Garry. Others were returning from furlough in Eastern Canada and the Mother Country. My sister had spent the winter in

Hamilton, and had come across with father's party from St. Paul. I alone was fresh from the West and the big plains. Around our camp-fire until late that night we exchanged news and related incidents, and before daylight next morning had breakfasted together and parted. I found my boys sleeping soundly when I rode in on them at the lake. From there we went for lunch to the forks of the road in the Thick-wood Hills. Here I pitched camp and, as I was not sure which of these roads father would come by, I rode rapidly along the old trail, and reaching the eastern branching of the road, found that my friends had gone the other trail. Returning on this I came up to where they were "nooning," and was received by father with open arms. Job and Joseph, the two Indian boys father had with him, were also delighted, for I brought them tidings of their friends, and once more they had someone to talk to in their mother-tongue.

I found that father had with him quite a number of Eastern people. There were the Rev. Peter Campbell and family, and the two Sniders, who subsequently became teachers in our Mission schools. There were also a cousin of mine, John Chantler, and a lad, Enoch Skinner, from Toronto. Besides those who belonged to the Mission party, there were three men from

Minnesota, a father and his two sons, Barlett by name, who had accompanied them from the Mississippi to the Saskatchewan; also two families of Red River settlers, who had taken this opportunity of travelling in father's train to visit their friends in the Saskatchewan country, and take part once more in a buffalo hunt.

We moved on almost immediately on my arrival, and camping short of where I left my boys I galloped ahead and brought them in. I had ridden in the saddle between ninety and one hundred miles that day, but so glad was I to meet father and these new friends from the East that I did not feel the least fatigue. The next day was Saturday, and by pushing through the Thickwood Hills we camped in the evening at Bear's Paddling Lake. All day as we travelled father and I rode in our saddles side by side, as he recounted to me the work of the year in Eastern Canada. He told me how he had pled with our missionary authorities until they concluded to establish in the Red River Valley, and had sent the Rev. George Young to that work, and the Rev. Egerton R. Young to Norway House. He gave me a description of the journey by steamer to the Upper Mississippi, and thence by carts and waggons through the plains of Minnesota and Dakota, and on into the Selkirk Settlement, where they parted from the

Youngs; and, continuing the journey up the valley of the Assiniboine, had crossed the divide and the south branch of the great Saskatchewan. "And now," said he, "I am tired of the long journey, and of handling tenderfeet, and I purpose to start bright and early Monday morning for home, leaving the whole company and outfit to your care for the rest of the trip." I said that I thought I could handle the concern, and that he was welcome to my horses and one of my boys. I wished him a quick trip, and having been a sailor in his youth, he answered me, with a twinkle of his eye, "When I leave you next Monday morning I will not take a reef in my rigging until with the blessing of Heaven I reach Victoria."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Father pushes on for home in advance—Hard times for the "tenderfeet"—A plunge into icy water—My brother David gallops into camp—His high spirits prove infectious—Kindness of the Hudson's Bay Company—Oxen sent to help us in to Victoria—A mutinous camp-follower—My threat of a sound thrashing subdues the mutineer—Our long journey is ended—Adieu to my readers.

We spent a quiet Sabbath on the shore of the lake, resting and worshipping. As some of the new-comers were quite songful, we enjoyed listening to and learning some of the beautiful hymns that had come in vogue since we left older Canada. Early Monday morning we were astir. Father, taking with him Mrs. Campbell and her two children and one of my boys, started on to make a flying trip home. Mrs. Campbell was glad to make a change from slow to fast travel, and I also was glad to see the lady and her children go, for this meant very much earlier starting for the rest of the party. Father had said to me, "The stock is in good shape, John: you can push from here." And push we did, sometimes too much so for the taste

and convenience of the green hands amongst us. Already the later autumn was upon us with its cold nights, and to turn out long before daylight and prepare breakfast and harness up, and be rolling on sometimes hours before sunrise, was anything but pleasant to flesh and blood not inured to that kind of life.

As with the "Ancient Pilgrims," murmurings and scoldings were frequent; but notwithstanding we continued to start early and drive late, and made good time westward. I well remember coming to Jackfish Creek early one morning. The crossing was rough with big boulders, and there was about an inch of ice on the water. I rode my horse several times through the ford to smash up the ice, and called to my cart driver to dismount and take his "lead" horse by the head and wade in, thus lessening the chances of an upset while passing through. Setting the example myself, I took the lead ox by the head, and wading beside him, passed him and his load safely over. But certain of our tenderfeet were afraid to step into the cold water, and the result was almost disastrous to some of the carts and loads. One of these gentlemen, having at last to jump down into the middle of the creek, made a misstep and fell full length into the ice and cold water: and not until then did he see that someone knew better than he did. He was

"He was a funny-looking specimen as he picked himself up out of the icy stream." (*Page 273.*)

a funny-looking specimen as he picked himself up out of the icy stream, and in a little while, when he was standing beside the big camp-fire warming himself, I said to him, "You richly deserved your ducking, young man; the next time do what you are told, and it will be better for you."

Early and late we rolled up the north bank of the Saskatchewan, those of our company capable of estimating the natural advantages of a new country filled with admiration for the rich and lovely region we were traversing. Doubtless a trans-continental railroad will come along some day, and cross and recross this very trail we were using. Thousands of prosperous homes will dot these plains and fill these valleys with that stronger and more permanent life for which they are so richly endowed by nature's God. The whole land from Carlton to Victoria is one great ready-made farm.

From the north branch of the Saskatchewan, extending a hundred miles north and then west up its whole length, is to be found one of the richest portions of Canada. And we were rolling steadily through this. Every hour a new scene, every turn a fresh view; the strength and endurance of our stock testifying to the quality of the natural grasses, the mud and dust on our wheels evidencing the wealth of soil, and

the altitude and the large percentage of sunshine vouching for the pureness of atmosphere and healthy condition of climate. This is my sixth trip through this part of the North-West Territories, and as I felt in the morning of my first acquaintance with this immense garden, I now, as the sunlight of my growing knowledge of its many resources is rising and enlarging, am fully convinced as to its great wealth of soil and grass, its water and timber and climate, not to speak of the mineral developments which in all probability will come in the future.

On the twelfth day after father left us, while breakfasting on the bank of Saddle Lake Creek, having come some eight miles already that morning, we were delighted to have my brother David gallop into our camp, bringing us word from home. Father had made a marvellously quick trip, and the whole settlement was now looking for our coming.

David not only brought us news from home, but his jovial noise and wild western boisterous fun put new life into the tenderfeet of our party, who had begun to think the distance without end and the hardships too much to bear, and were constantly reverting to the "onions and garlic of former Egypts." Moreover, his coming lightened my work, for now the roads were newer and the necessity of careful

driving more constantly with us. By noon of the thirteenth day of my taking over the party we had surmounted the worst place on the road, crossed the valley, pulled up the precipitous banks of the White Mud River, and were at our dinner, when an Indian came to us with several fresh oxen.

These had been sent by Mr. Tait, the gentleman in charge of the Hudson's Bay Post at Victoria, to help us in at the end of our journey. And right here I want to say that this has been all through the years my uniform experience with the officers and employees of the Hudson's Bay Company. I cannot understand the venom and bitterness with which some missionaries always speak and write about this old and honorable company.

These fresh oxen were indeed welcome aids to the more jaded and weaker of our stock, and very soon I had apportioned them to the several drivers, when the very tall gentleman of our party said he would take one for his cart. I said, "No, sir! Your horse is all right for Victoria." But he insisted, and I again refused. Then came a cry from another tenderfoot that his oxen were lost, and I jumped on my horse to hunt up the missing cattle. Having found them, I also found that my tall friend had persisted in taking the ox, and had him hitched

to his cart. This nettled me, and I jumped right at him, and said, "Unhitch that ox as quick as you ever did anything in your life;" but the big mutineer simply smiled at me. "I mean it," I said; "unhitch that ox, or I will thrash you most warmly." And now his elongated highness saw I was in earnest, and made haste to turn out the ox. I then gave the animal over to the party to whom I had given him in the first place, at the same time telling my tall gentleman that in a few hours I hoped to bring this party to its destination. After that he could do as he pleased so far as I was concerned; but until then my word was law.

Early that evening we reached Victoria, and the long wearisome overland journey was over, the months of continuous travel across bridgeless streams and lonely stretches of prairie and woodland. Everybody was thankful.

That same evening, as usual with him, David got up some gymnastics. And when I had out-run and out-jumped and out-thrown and out-pulled my long friend, I verily believe he came to the conclusion that he did well to obey me as he did.

And now that I have seen this spot (where in loneliness and poverty extreme I began work scarcely six years since) grow into a flourishing settlement, where Christianity and civilization

are to the front as in no other place in this big western country; and now also that I am privileged to form one in the small company of Missionary agents and pioneers here assembled, but which, nevertheless, is the largest gathering of the kind the Saskatchewan country has ever yet seen; and furthermore, as I have many more stirring scenes and incidents to relate at some future time, I will here and now, in the late autumn of 1868, bid my readers a grateful adieu.

JOHN McDOUGALL.

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